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THE ENGLISHWOMAN.

A NOVEL.

Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.

Eliza Giffard Verquios
THE *Flintshire*
ENGLISHWOMAN.

A NOVEL.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS BYRON,

AUTHOR OF THE ENGLISHMAN; HOURS OF AFFLUENCE
AND DAYS OF INDIGENCE; MODERN VILLA AND
ANCIENT CASTLE, &c. &c.

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.
In every work regard the writer's end,
Since none can compass more than they intend;
And if the means be just, the conduct true,
Applause, in spite of trivial faults, is due.

Second Edition.

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THE

ENGLISHWOMAN.

CHAP. I.

“ True love’s the gift which God hath given,

To man alone beneath the Heaven.

It is not fantasy’s hot fire,

Whose wishes soon as granted fly ;

It liveth not in fierce desire,

With dead desire it doth not die ;

It is the secret sympathy,

The silver link, the silken tie,

Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,

In body and in soul can bind.”

THE love that virtue inspires is a pure, a lambent flame, unmixed by the gross feelings that mark the libertine: it may own all the restless and innumerable tendernesses that susceptibility induces, while its motives and its sufferings will bear the test of affectionate inquiry. “ Pure love,” as an

humble, and not inelegant youth, observed in a Sonnet on Absence—

“ May droop with regret, beat high with desire,
Whenever thy image returns to my view ;
It in absence may weep, and in anguish expire,
But can know no pulsation, not springing from you.”

Such was the impression that Agnes Melvin had made on lord Berriton. He would now have found it as difficult to attach dishonour with the passion that animated his bosom, as he would formerly have believed it impracticable to blend the ideas of love and marriage. With a precipitation natural to his character, he, on the instant of his return from lady Strongford's, poured forth a passionate yet flattering avowal of his passion—offered his hand to the unassuming Agnes, and requested her to name any friend, whose sanction she deemed it necessary he should obtain, as a passport to her unreserved society. Dispatching Foster with this his first honourable confession, lord Berriton mentally argued the advantages and disadvantages of marriage

—not a poetical idea floated in his mind ; he saw Agnes presiding at his table, directing his household, himself envied—and he soothed himself to the belief, that her entire affections would be his own. Oh ! fairy fabric ! airy nothing !

“ Too low he builds, who builds beneath the sky.”

Foster returned.—“ Miss Melvin has left London, my lord.”

“ Gone !—where ?—where is my letter ?”

“ The family will forward it to her, my lord.”

“ Did you learn where she is gone ?”

“ Into Berkshire, my lord.” Foster retired.

Suspense was insupportable : he had opened his heart, and told its most valuable secrets to a woman, and because lord Ber-riton should not have blushed, he did blush. That letter, which, if read to the world, would have raised him in the opinion of the worthy part of it, was a source of disquiet to him ; he felt that its most compre-

hensive sense was faint in comparison of his feelings, yet he dreaded lest his confession should fall into the hands of any but his mistress—in fact, lord Berriton was not censurable for his present doubts, but that he had ever, by associating with the dissolute of his own sex, and the dishonourable of the other, been taught, from sad conviction, that where honour does not bind, the rules of custom and of civil society are unheeded.

The real fate of lord Berriton's tender epistle remains yet to be developed in its proper place. The next morning beheld his lordship, with all the ardour of love, pursuing his way into Berkshire. He had from the Wilmots ascertained her route; and with the earliest light of day, accompanied by Foster, hastened to reiterate the vows his letter but imperfectly conveyed. What the feelings of Miss Wilmot and Swivel were, when his lordship in person inquired Miss Melvin's address, it would be impossible to describe, nor is it necessary, at this juncture, to explain, why their sig-

nificant and horror-struck countenances appeared so enigmatical to lord Berriton, as to raise a doubt in his mind on which he dared not to dwell.

His lordship listened to their designing, though apparently friendly, cautions, respecting the young woman who had quitted their house. He bowed his thanks for their information as to her residence, and, with a haste that evinced his zeal to overtake the unconscious orphan, left the ladies to the animadversions that their unquiet spirits might suggest.

From the moment that Cecil had resolved on quitting Berkshire, Mrs. Manners had, in concert with the Adamses, ardently desired that Agnes might be spared the meeting with a man, to whose merits they believed her sensible, and whose reciprocal feelings might be influenced by such a meeting.

“I do not,” said the amiable Mrs. Manners, “doubt the principles of either party—they are both amiable and ingenuous; the virtues of Miss Asgill claim the entire

confidence of the man she distinguishes—nay, I feel regret that a doubt should attach to the firmness of that heart, on which so liberal and charming a girl has so long confided her hopes of happiness. The intention of our Agnes to quit the Wilmots, is, by herself, I believe, postponed, in the hope of meeting a more eligible asylum. Will you, my dear Mrs. Adams, take a journey for me, that my guardianship and rheumatic habit at this moment precludes? I will write the dear girl, and you will say all that your tenderness dictates. I shall not hesitate, when I can observe on the state of her health,” continued Mrs. Manners, “to avow my motives; her vanity may not have placed the attentions of Mr. Cecil to more than friendship; had she done so, her delicacy would applaud the attentions that were active only for her happiness.”

Mrs. Adams was too fondly interested in the fate of Agnes, not to meet the generous sympathy of Mrs. Manners. Adams rejoiced in the plan; for, as he had witnessed the virtuous struggle in the mind of

Cecil, he had more duly apportioned the difficulty of his passing through the ordeal of love and friendship, without making their feelings blend so as to destroy the proud distinction that a yielding heart deems its exclusive right.

With a philanthropy that characterized this good man, he had no sooner handed his Charlotte into the carriage of Mrs. Manners, and breathed an unfashionable apostrophe for her safety, than he set about arranging the little comforts of his dwelling. The most choice shrubs were placed in the sitting-room of Agnes; he selected such books as he knew would please. "She shall not quit us again," said Adams, as he placed the Spectator, Guardian, and other works of fadeless worth on the hanging shelves.

"Is Mrs. Adams within, sir?" said the feeble Susan, as she drew breath after ascending the stairs.

"Oh, it is good Mrs. Susan from the rectory!" said Adams, turning, and discovering the housekeeper of Cecil.

"Mrs. Adams is gone to London," said Adams; "can I be her steward?"

"To London!" said Susan; "dear-a-me, well that is odd! Why, she'll see master then?"

"I think not," said Adams, brushing the dust from some volumes in his hand.

"You are very busy, sir," said Susan, observing the arrangements that were going on.

"A little so, Mrs. Susan."

"One would think," said Susan, smiling, "that your lady and my master were gone on the same errand, for I am all bustle."

"Indeed!" said Adams.

"Yes, I am," said Susan, who had waited an encouraging word from the doctor; "for though master said he was not going to bring a wife home, yet I am sure he will; for what's to hinder it, sir? as I said — 'You are going to the lady; she is your promised love; and I am sure,' says I, 'you would be a great deal happier than you are, if you were but married at once.' 'Do you think so?' said master. 'I am certain,'

says I, 'for there you are, moping and fretting, and walking the church path, by the old gentleman, Mr. Melvin's grave, there.'

'It is very proper to use one's self to such scenes,' says he; 'and you are mistaken, good Susan. I do not grieve,' said he; 'we cannot have every thing as we would wish in this life.' 'That's certain, sir,' says I; 'but as you have a great deal of good before you, I hope you will take it while you can; so I shall make the house ready,' says I. He smiled at me as he got into the chaise, but begged I would not fatigue myself, as there was quite time enough to get things leisurely arranged before that event took place."

"But you cannot suppose Mrs. Adams gone on such an errand?" said the doctor, smiling; "she must get rid of me first."

"God forbid!" said Susan; "for what would all the village do, if you were gone? That minds me, sir, of what I came for. Your good lady said she would give me a

little more of the eye-water, that did me so much good."

" You shall have some, Mrs. Susan," said the doctor; " take a seat, my friend, and I will order it to be got ready."

The doctor gave the order, and, on his return, found Susan, with her spectacles on, examining the room attentively.—" This is a monstrous pleasant look-out, sir; yet I think the rectory has a little the 'vantage; but, to be sure, master has done a deal towards making it so pretty."

" He has," said Adams; " but he has leisure to do it."

" True, sir, true," said Susan; " I hope his lady, when he brings her, will be of his mind, for its a sad thing when people an't of the same mind after they are married."

" A very sad thing, Mrs. Susan!"

" I can assure you, sir, I was in a sad taking till within a few days; I was much afraid that that fine Jezebel lady had a mind to be my mistress; and its an unchristian word to use, but it would have been a *mo-*

del impossible for me to have lived with such a mistress ; I quite hate her."

" That is, indeed, an unchristian word to use," said the doctor. " I suppose you mean lady Sophia Western ? She is very rich, Mrs. Susan, and a handsome woman."

" Handsome !—No, that I deny ; she handsome ! no, no, doctor, she is a painted fine lady. No, sir, if I might be so bold as to say, I never did see but one lady that is suited to be my master's wife."

" And that, I hope, is the lady he is engaged to," said Adams.

" Why, I think not, sir. Miss Melvin, sir, is the wife I should choose for him. Such a condescending, sweet, amiable lady ! so charitable, and such a dutiful daughter ! just what a parson's lady ought to be ; the whole village already love her ; and though I believe the lady he is promised to is as good as may be, yet I should like a lady that was not high-minded."

" You could not meet with a more amiable or charitable mistress, my good Susan, than the intended wife of Mr. Cecil ; she is

humble, virtuous, and has great power to be serviceable, which is what she delights in."

"I am glad to hear it, sir," said Susan; "but may we hope to see Miss Melvin in this part again, sir?"

"I am preparing to receive her," said the doctor; "I hope she will take possession of this room to-morrow."

"Lack-a-day! how glad I am!" said Susan. "How busy you have been, sir, to make it ready! well, I cannot help wishing that all my toil was preparing the rectory for that good young lady to come to; but God's will be done!" said Susan, as she took the eye-water from the servant, and bade the doctor good morning.

"Amen!" said Adams, whom we must believe disposed to think with the thoughtful Susan, that Miss Melvin would make a charming wife for the village rector.

Mrs. Adams had no sooner imparted the wishes of Mrs. Manners, and delivered the letter she had charge of, than Agnes willing assented to accompany her worthy friend. To Mr. Wilmot and Harriet she made

the unfeigned feelings of her character so obvious, as to leave the impression her merits deserved. The children, who were her principal charge, wept their regrets at her departure. Mrs. Wilmot said something about illiberality and ingratitude, in quitting her at so short a notice.

“ I should blush at the charges, madam,” said Agnes, “ if I felt myself guilty ; but a little recollection will, I trust, reconcile you to the conduct I adopt. On a recent occasion, madam, you did not seem to consider *notice* necessary, and I should, agreeably to your command, have quitted this house, had not Mr. Wilmot and Miss Harriet made it appear, that my continuing for a short period would be gratifying to them. But he absolves me from a longer residence, now he learns that my friends in Berkshire require my presence.”

“ You are very kind, ma'am,” said Mrs. Wilmot, with a sneer ; “ I did not know my obligations to you, or that it was necessary you should be entreated by my husband.”

Agnes felt the sarcasm, but rose above it.—“ You are at liberty to think as you please, ma’am,” said she. “ I shall retain a just sense of the kindness I have received in this family ; and, as resentment makes no part of my character, I shall endeavour to forget my obligations here,” and she curtsied to Swivel, and lightly glanced over the features of Isabella.

Something like shame coloured the cheek of Miss Wilmot.

“ I owe you something, Miss,” said Mrs. Wilmot, drawing her purse.

“ Not a shilling, ma’am,” said Agnes, opposing the idea.

“ I will not add to my *obligations*,” said Mrs. Wilmot, with a sarcastic smile.

“ Nor *I* to my degra——,” degradation Agnes would have said, but politeness forbade her concluding the word.

“ Do you mean to take another situation, Miss Melvin ?” said Swivel.

“ I have not thought of it yet, ma’am,” said Agnes.

“ Because I would advise you, as a friend,

to throw aside these heroics ; the mild nature of my friend Mrs. Wilmot may *pass* over what others would severely reprimand."

" I shall fully *appreciate* the *sincerity* of your advice, ma'am," said Agnes, with a smile, as incredulous as appropriate.

The arrival of Mrs. Adams spared further mortification to the emerging dependant, who quitted a residence where her feelings had been both pained and pleased, without a pang of regret, saving that which the equanimity of the affectionate Harriet demanded.

The suddenness of her departure had so engaged her feelings, that reflection had not crossed her mind ; but after a few miles had tranquillized her spirits, and she had replied to the questions that friendship dictated, the refinement inseparable from a delicate mind conjured up a chimera to damp its present ease. " Ah," thought Agnes, " it is pity that has induced this mandate ; my bosom's weakness is known, and they feared I should betray my feel-

ings. No, Cecil, however I *may* own your power, never shall a word or action of the dependant, the houseless Agnes, evince *her* weakness or *your* power."

Mrs. Adams, who saw the emotions that shook her frame, sought not their cause, but endeavoured, by the most conciliating manners, to engage her attention. Thus passed the time until they stopped for the night. Agnes now remembered the protection that Miss Asgill and lady Mary had offered her, and that her departure, without seeing them, would appear highly ungrateful. She wrote to lady Mary and our heroine, explaining circumstances, and begged to rest her hopes of confirming a friendship, that she considered as a flattering distinction, to no very distant period.

Early on the ensuing morning they pursued their journey, and reached the dwelling of doctor Adams towards evening. As she returned the embrace of the good doctor, her tears flowed unrestrainedly; her father rose on her memory, and every scene in which her amiable friend had shared her

griefs, passed in quick succession before her mental view.

Mrs. Manners, in a low phaeton, driven by lady Sophia Western, took tea with the Adamses. Again Agnes was pressed to the bosom of affliction. Lady Sophia regarded her with more politeness than usual; yet it was obvious that a desire to know the trifles of the day, the fashionable and evanescent wonders that constitute the all of high life, made her thus condescending.

The indifference with which Agnes spoke on subjects so important in the eyes of lady Sophia, made her ladyship sigh. She contrasted the delight she should take in such scenes; and her romantic dream of love being over, she panted again to mix in the motley group. If she walked, no charming surprise, no wonderful interesting coincidence, soothed her feelings, or flattered her passion; alas!

“ The woods, the streams, the fields remain,
But Damon still she seeks in vain.”

“ Must we draw lots who is to possess this

treasure?" said Mrs. Manners, as she extended her hand to Agnes, and looked at doctor Adams.

"Candidly," said Adams, "my right in this girl is prior to yours, madam; but I will promise her to you in a day or two."

"I admit your right," said Mrs. Manners, "but will take no refusal for your dining with me to-morrow. Lady Neville and sir John Owen will be my guests."

"We will join you," said Adams, "most readily."

Agnes wanted words to express her gratitude for friendship so disinterested. "How unlike the transient professions of the gay world!" said she, as she led Mrs. Manners to the carriage, and affectionately pressed her hand.

Lady Sophia jumped into the phaeton with an agility quite equestrian.—"Miss Melvin," said she, "do not forget your toilet to-morrow—sir John is a very formidable beau, I can assure you."

"I hope your ladyship has not *found* him so," said Agnes, smiling.

"Me! oh, shocking! I could as soon fall in love with Highflyer, Hambletonian, Nimrod, or any other noted racer, as the groom of the stables."

"Oh, then sir John is only formidable to little minds?" said Agnes, "a sort of point at which a plebeian might arrive, though beneath your ladyship's sphere."

"Not exactly that," said lady Sophia, hesitating at the *naïveté* of look that accompanied this speech; "for really sir John is very handsome, and rich, and was, besides, an admirer of Miss Asgill's."

"Indeed!" said Agnes; "then he has discernment, and aspires to a height that any man may proudly avow"

"Do you admire her so much?" said lady Sophia, gently touching the horses with her whip; "she is flat, I think."

"She is timid without affectation," said Agnes, "candid without bluntness, liberal without ostentation, and beautiful without vanity."

"I hate to hear one woman praise another," said lady Sophia.

“ You are not often offended by such eulogiums,” said Mrs. Adams.

“ We must leave Miss Asgill in your hands,” said Mrs. Manners to Agnes, “ for lady Sophia is forgetting that the dews are not necessary to my rheumatic shoulders.”

Her ladyship seized the reins, and was out of sight in a few minutes. Agnes retired early to her chamber. From her window, the moon gilding the village spire, and the modest mansion of the village priest, were objects that arrested her attention. Her thoughts passed from the dead to the living ; the blended feeling robbed each of its poignancy ; and silently resolving to visit the tomb of her parent on the ensuing morning, she closed the curtain, and retired to repose.

Our heroine, whose heart, though lightened of its treachery to love, was still under the impression of tender anxiety, found it difficult to rally her spirits. To lady Mary, she, in few words, explained the conversation that had passed ; and when her ladyship, with a satisfaction she affec-

ted not to conceal, declared that she felt a presentiment that happiness would soon court her smiles, found her hopes treated as fallacious, and that her beloved *protégée* was silent and unhappy. She forbore to speak on the subject, though she participated in all that our heroine too evidently felt.

The letters of Agnes were welcomed with warmth. Lady Mary was really anxious to see Miss Melvin. They replied to her, and requested that a visit to Millington should be amongst her fixed arrangements.

Cecil, whose devotion to Agnes was fervent as pure, now hastened to Mr. Wilmot's. By a mistake of the servant, he was ushered into the drawing-room ere his purpose was known. "Is Miss Melvin at home?" said Cecil, addressing Mrs. Swivel, who, from her ease and consequence, he decided on as the mistress of the mansion.

"Miss Melvin has left this," said Swivel, ambiguously.

"Gone!" said Cecil, with surprise.

"Yes, gone, sir," said Swivel, catching

her tone from the manner of Cecil. "It was lord—what's his name—that——"

"Madam," said Cecil, "be explicit; you say Miss Melvin is gone; with whom did she go, and where to?"

"Why, I was going to observe, sir, that my lord Berriton was as much surprised as you are that she should go off so suddenly."

"Go off!" said Cecil; "what is my lord's opinion to me, madam?—who is her companion, pray?"

"Why, a Mrs. Adams, an apothecary's wife, who lives somewhere in Berkshire."

Cecil replied—"I see, madam," said he, rising, "that you do not know the lady Miss Melvin has accompanied. She is one of the best of women."

"Do be seated, sir," said Isabella, who began to recognise lady Sophia's handsome parson in the man before her. "Miss Melvin, sir," said Isabella, throwing all the softness into her appearance that she thought most attractive, "is a young person of a very unsettled temper; our poor

endeavours to make her happy have been frustrated in consequence ; but there are some people whom it is impossible to make sensible of the kindness of one's intentions."

" There are such persons, no doubt, madam," said Cecil, " but you must pardon me, if I cannot class Miss Melvin amongst them. I have seen her," said Cecil, his countenance brightening with his subject, " at once the humblest and most exalted of women, suffering under griefs (that it is fashionable to weep for in description, and fly from in reality), subduing her own feelings, that her exertions might sooth the anguish of a dying parent !"

" Pray, how is Miss Asgill ?" said Swivel, who thought, by this skilful parry, to call the energetic parson to his senses.

" She is well, I thank you, madam."

Isabella looked astonished. The collected and steady look that accompanied the reply was an encouraging proof of his indifference towards our heroine. " Is my friend, lady Sophia, in health ?" said she.

Cecil's cheek crimsoned ; the confession of lady Sophia was yet too recent to be thought of but' with feelings of disgust. " Lady Sophia was in health when I left Berkshire, ma'am."

Cecil rose ; he was anxious to be gone, to tell Marian his disappointment, and to ask her advice.

Isabella was resolved on detaining him. " Has not lady Sophia an uncommon share of sensibility ?" said she, looking to Cecil for a reply.

He bowed.

" I fear too much for her own happiness," continued Isabella.

" We will hope not," said Cecil, smiling.

" Aye, aye, that's the comfort—you gentlemen of the cloth always talk of *Hope*," said Swivel, " where *we* can see nothing of the sort."

" I trust you are not without hope," said Cecil, looking towards her with a meaning she could not but understand.

" I—I am not speaking of myself," said she, " but of poor lady Sophia, who is

the most artless, charming, sensitive girl, excepting the young lady present, in the world."

"I hope, madam," said Cecil, as he moved towards the door, "that your young friends allow for the warmth of your friendship. Miss Wilmot, good morning," and bowing to Swivel, he departed.

"What a prig! a pedant! an ungrateful, not to say insolent puppy!" said Swivel.

"He has beautiful eyes," said Isabella, as she stood before the glass adjusting her ringlets.

"Miss Wilmot," said Swivel, "I see how it is; your friend, lady Sophia, has been the dupe of this sentimental parson."

"I don't think he likes her," said Isabella, disregarding the observation of Swivel; "and, indeed, poor Sophia is affected."

"Affected!" said Swivel; "why you astonish me, Miss Wilmot. Who has a right to be so, if she has not? An heiress, young,"

handsome, and accomplished—is it not the fashion to be so?—do you see any of your natural, candid, matter-of-fact people that get off?—the men of fashion adore the languid, lisping, Lydian measure, of our present race of beauties.”

“Not so much since Grassini’s stately, regal pace was imported,” said Isabella, at the same time moving with her best imitation of that performer.

“Ah, that only *took*,” said Swivel, “because his ——— likes big, scornful-looking dames.”

“But, Swivel, what could have brought Mr. Cecil here?”

“That magnet of attraction, Miss Melvin, to be sure,” said Swivel.

“Good Heavens! what can the men see in that girl?”

“It is her art, Miss Wilmot, her art.”

“But, my dear Swivel,” said Isabella, speaking in a low voice, “that letter—could you have imagined that Berriton would seriously offer her his hand?”

“I certainly did not think he would,”

replied Swivel ; “ and even now, though we have had *damning proof*, I believe it to be a device to get her into his power.”

“ I hope the letter will never be inquired for.”

“ Fear not,” said Swivel, “ I will take care of that.”

“ Let me see,” said Isabella, who was yet too great a novice in *vice* to reflect on an act so flagrant without proportionate disquiet, “ Fitzowen’s masquerade will be in three days ; I am glad Melvin is gone ; she would have been sporting her graces in some apparently artless character.”

“ No doubt,” said Swivel. “ I am determined on going as a *Fortune-Teller* ; I cannot be deceived in their disguise, and I think,” she continued, with a malignant smile, “ I will have my revenge on lady Robert ; I’ll pour some truths into Fitzowen’s ears.”

“ I wonder what Miss Asgill will go as ?”

“ Something that will shew her form, to

be sure," said Swivel; "she always takes care of that."

"Her arms are uncommonly round and white," said Isabella; "I can scarcely think them natural."

"I think they are," said Swivel; "but her hair is her greatest beauty."

"Harriet says her eyes are," said Isabella.

"And sir Edward Montgomery, in my hearing," said Swivel, "declared, 'that the purity of her skin, and the branching of her veins, seemed a beauty peculiar to her, as if,' said he, 'the ingenuousness of her mind were perceptible on its snowy surface; she no sooner speaks than a transparent glow rushes over her features, that makes her beauty dangerous to look upon. *She is ever varying, ever new*, in person; while her mind is the basis of every fixed and amiable quality!'"

"Montgomery is a great flatterer," said Isabella.

"Is he?" said Swivel; "well, I protest I did not think he would take the trouble

to be civil to any woman ; and I was quite surprised to hear all he said about Miss Asgill."

" He don't look half so handsome as he used," said Isabella.

" He is a great libertine," said Swivel, " to my knowledge ; the Barnes mistress is given up, and he now has one in the neighbourhood of Ficcadilly."

" Monstrous !" said Isabella ; " yet you know, Swivel, a reformed rake makes the best husband."

" I verily believe, Miss Wilmot," said Swivel, " that Montgomery is the man you prefer."

" Heigho !" said Isabella, " I confess he is too much to my idea, to look on him with indifference ; even his whims, and he has many, have a pleasing eccentricity in them. If I were not positive that Miss Asgill is too far engaged to recede, I should certainly think it very probable that she would be lady Montgomery, there seems such an uncommon interest in Montgomery whenever she moves or speaks."

“ Poh ! poh ! ” said Swivel ; “ sir Edward is from a country that knows how to make its advantages with our sex—I grant he is rather attentive now, but when she is the parson’s wife, you will see what assiduities he will accord her. Let the priggish Mr. Cecil take care ; Montgomery is not a marrying man, depend on it.”

While these amiable friends were raising and levelling characters, according to their liberal custom, Cecil, disappointed and musing, took his way to Harley-street. He had quitted Marian that morning after breakfast, resolving on an interview with Agnes, in which he proposed to offer her his hand, and obtain her permission to bring his sister to her, whose influence, he trusted, would be used to draw her from a situation that his feelings revolted at. She was gone ! His heart died within him at the sound. A nobleman was named at the same time ; his pride took alarm. But again his bosom was tranquillized, by Mrs. Adams being the companion of her journey. Miss Wilmot addressed Mrs. Swivel

by name; all the malevolence of her nature was known to him from report. His credulity was instantly withheld, and Agnes took her former hold on his heart—yet a transient regret remained; was there any reason for associating that nobleman's name with Miss Melvin? “Rank, power, and splendour, are dazzling things,” sighed Cecil; “yet they only impress light minds.” Again, amongst his acquaintance, he knew but two, who had strength of mind to resist such advantages—Selina and Agnes; “but Selina,” sighed Cecil, “Selina is surrounded by friends, and independent, while Agnes is isolated, bearing up against an unfeeling world, and eating the bread of dependence. Would she be blamable in accepting such an establishment?”—and there appeared so many really ostensible reasons why she might accept it, that Cecil reached Harley-street in the full persuasion that Agnes had left London at her own desire, to be at liberty to receive the addresses of her noble admirer.

On entering the drawing-room in Har-

ley-street, he found our heroine and Marian together. "You are the very pair I would seek," said Cecil, taking a hand of each, and placing himself between them.

"Francis," said Marian, "you are ill; what ails you, my brother?"

"Ought I to allow," said Cecil, with a forced gaiety, "that I can be so while thus blessed? Yet, Selina, you are still to be the treasurer of my cares; you will continue to allow me this privilege?"

"Most undoubtedly," said Selina; "I am flattered by such confidence."

Cecil pressed the hand of Selina to his lips. It was the mild, attempered affection of a brother, and she met its warmth with all the modesty of her character. "Since a fate immutable has disposed of our once associating hearts, Selina, it has been mine to be attached to a woman as much like yourself in mind and manners, as it is possible to conceive two persons could be. Her rank in life is wholly unworthy of her. No sooner did our mutual feelings dissolve our plighted vows, than my heart dictated

that an immediate avowal to her, and the introduction of a sister, who, I knew, would appreciate her worth, would be, to myself, a soothing consolation, and to her a tribute of respect that her virtues demanded. It is true, I was first to be *received* as a lover; but what the heart wishes, it frequently makes probable. I sought her this morning—she is gone; I could not conceal my disappointment; and though a moment's reflection checked the idea, I *did*, from the insidious observation of a most contemptible female, feel a transient weakness at which I now blush. Of her fair fame, I can have no doubt; but she is followed and admired, courted by splendour, and is herself dependant; and, more than all, I have never *sought* her love."

"Francis," said Selina, while the animation of her countenance seemed to irradiate her whole frame, "is not Agnes Melvin the arbitress of your fate?"

"She is, my sweet girl," said Cecil; "tell me, Selina, do you know her?"

“ I esteem, I love her.”

“ Ah,” said Marian, “ does not love play strange vagaries, Selina ?” alluding to the words of lord Glastonbury.

“ He does !—Oh ! Cecil, how I rejoice !” said Selina ; “ Agnes is the most amiable, the most charming of women !—you must be happy.”

“ How decided you are !” said Cecil. “ Remember, Selina, I have yet to be estimated by your friend.”

“ She will value you—she does,” said Selina ; and she checked, as indelicate, the now many irrefragable proofs of tenderness that her active mind linked together as evident marks of love. The music-book, and the confusion that accompanied her looks, at her discovery of a semblance to a friend’s writing—her refusal to see her, and passionate exclamation of grief when at Barnes—the embarrassed manner that she had observed, when Miss Wilmot called Cecil “ her parson”—all these were essential traits of preference ; and she mentally

rejoiced that Cecil would, at length, possess a heart that was worthy of him.

“ I ask no tender confidence,” said Cecil, persuasively, “ but scarcely could the most unreserved development gratify me more than the present certainty that you are the selected friend of Agnes Melvin.”

“ Do not exclude me, Frank,” said Marian ; “ for, with all deference to Selina, I have taken a sincere interest in Miss Melvin’s happiness. Her proscribed and unpleasant residence has prevented our wishes being gratified, but we are all prepared to love her.”

“ Her departure, just at this moment, is extraordinary,” said Cecil.

“ I will account for it,” said our heroine, and she drew the letter from her pocket which Agnes had written from the inn.

“ Well,” said Marian, after she had read the letter, “ your mistress did not run away because she would not meet you. Her friend, Mrs. Manners, and Mrs. Adams, are desirous to have her company in Berk-

shire; and, I believe, after that," said Marian, looking archly, "she goes with you, Selina, to Millington for a few months."

"To Millington!" said Cecil, "indeed!" and he looked thoughtful.

"Perhaps you do not wish Miss Melvin should be introduced to our parents?" said Marian.

"Yes, yes, I do," said Cecil. "Cruel Marian, you are really more sportive now than at any other period that I remember."

"No wonder," said Marian; "sighs and tears, and fancied griefs, are the food of lovers; but a happy wife is a stranger to such itinerant intruders."

"Ever may you continue so, my beloved Marian!" said Cecil, as he kissed the cheek of Marian.

Selina felt that, at least, a hopeless passion might own such feelings, and her's must be hopeless and remain so; for carefully would she guard the secret of her absolved vows, lest her *motives* for such release should be discovered.—"Montgomery is tenacious, and refined in his senti-

ments. I know not," sighed Selina, " that he would be ambitious of the heart of a woman who had *once* believed her feelings so engaged as to be irrevocable, and whom the *world* has considered as affianced. I could believe he preferred me, but that is only a negative sort of preference. He might have loved, had I been free, had I never owned a decided partiality ; yet never did my bosom admit a more animated and clear distinction between the childish preference of youth, and the more fixed one of mature reason. Cecil's praise of another, his devotion to Agnes, soothes and delights me ; while the bare supposition of Montgomery's entering into engagements (that his person and combining claims to notice make probable) reach my ear, what are my internal feelings !—Oh ! dear Marian," thought our heroine, " a happy wife may look back on them with smiles ; but the trembling candidate for the heart of the man whom its idolatry deems perfect, may give her tears and

sighs in secret, yet feel the sad conviction that

“ Love wakes the nerve where agony is born.”

The entrance of Brooks gave a turn to the conversation. The perfect ease of the trio before him admitted the belief that their confessions had not diminished their esteem. “ Would you believe,” said Brooks, addressing our heroine, “ that lord Berriton has followed Miss Melvin into Berkshire, for the express purpose of laying his fortune at her feet ?”

“ It is a pity he took such a journey,” said Selina.

Cecil looked towards Selina ; she saw his fears.

“ Miss Melvin,” she continued, “ has been long accustomed to lord Berriton’s attentions, but she was more pained than pleased by them.”

“ I am really cruel enough to be quite pleased by it,” said Marian.

Cecil viewed Marian seriously.

“ I am, indeed, Frank, ” continued Marian ; “ to lord Berriton I feel it will not be a serious or lasting disappointment ; and, as it is his first honourable passion, it may give him a decided preference for virtue. The malevolent Swivel, and the no less unamiable Miss Wilmot, will meet a very useful mortification, while Agnes may indulge in a modest triumph over her insulting enemies.”

“ Your sex, my Marian,” said Brooks, “ have a peculiar facility in couching your expressions, but revenge is what you mean, downright woman’s revenge.”

“ I will not allow such a term,” said Selina.

“ But I will insist on it,” said Brooks, as he detained Selina to attend to his argument.

“ Well, then, you will yet permit me to say, that an *Englishwoman’s* revenge, if this is its *acmé*, is preferable to that of an *Italian*.”

“ Bravo, Selina ! ” said Marian ; “ now, Henry, you are fairly answered.”

“Saucy girl!” said Brooks, “she wants not your tutorage. I will have my revenge,” said he, and, seizing her forcibly, he whispered in her ear a few words, that seemed to have a magical effect.

A deep crimson suffused her cheeks, and she felt scarcely able to support herself. Marian, though no adept in the occult science, in part divined the subject, but, to relieve her delicate confusion, she adverted to Selina’s mention of Italian revenge, a danger which Brooks had narrowly escaped during his residence in that country; the deadly poison had been infused into his beverage, and would have wrought its purpose, had not a faithful servant frustrated the malice of the disappointed syren, who, strange to relate, was a woman of rank and family, under the dominion of a violent temper, aided by jealous doubts.

“You see for what bondage I was reserved,” said Brooks.

“Rather, for what happiness you were preserved,” said our heroine.

“An Englishwoman,” said Cecil, “whose

good education is strengthened by an early association with persons capable of calling her talents into action, will necessarily acquire that just opinion of herself, without egotism, that will induce a systematic and firm line of conduct. Above the affectations that result from inactivity, her purposes will stand confessed in some pursuit, some exertion of intellect, that must make her an object of emulation, while to herself it will prove, both mentally and experimentally, a never-failing source of happiness."

" I frequently contemplate a mere woman of fashion. What a listless machine it is !" said Brooks ; " yet I allow, that an Englishwoman, with all her faults, is a very superior sort of creature ; her errors are chiefly of the head ; with some few exceptions, education, the groundwork of terrestrial happiness, is seldom judiciously applied. Yet I am not of opinion that masculine instruction improves women. We may be *astonished* by the bold conceptions and energetic decisions of an Elizabeth,

but the *frailties* of a *Mary* would make a more lasting impression on our imaginations. However I may affront the masculine minds of the *few*, I must tell the gentle *mass*, that *pity* is a more apposite attribute to their *nature* than *awe*. Burke elegantly and emphatically says—‘That we never expect to be *astonished* by the mild attractions of beauty; surprise is the climax of female excellence; we attach an idea of beauty to every thing that is small and gentle; the *ocean* strikes us with awe—a *river* soothes our feelings—the *sun* dazzles the eye, but we faint beneath its *beams*—the *moon*, on the contrary, is an object ever viewed with modest, tender enthusiasm, whether it gilds the bayonet of the steady-paced centinel, whitens the sail of the ploughing mariner, or guides the landsman over the shadowy plain.’—It is Cowper who sings of

“The moonbeam sliding in between the trees.”

Is it not, Selina?”

“I think so,” said our heroine; “but

though I should own the justice of your remarks on our sex," said Selina, gaily, "you must not suppose that we are incompetent to judge of what should constitute the character and be the pursuits of yours."

"Who doubts your capacity to decide and judge accurately?" said Brooks. "Use those powers, and by the rejection of *puppyism* and reflected folly, teach the men your indisputable supremacy to *respect*—that, relying on their internal security, both as natives and polished beings, they want neither French fashions, German domestication 'theatrically,' or Italian voluptuousness, to make the English character conspicuous and exalted. At the same time, I would prove our advances to civilization, by fashions more consistent than those of madam Eve."

Selina and Marian blushed; but, though their self-examination was strict and impartial, they felt it was not necessary on their own parts.

Cecil and Brooks smiled.

"Your transparency is evident," said Brooks, looking at our heroine.

"Mine!" said Selina, and again she glanced fearfully over her dress.

"Your mind is transparent," said Brooks, as he pressed her hand affectionately. "Yes, Selina, I repeat it, yours is a transparent mind. Oh! may I give that mind to the keeping of a heart as generous as your own, but not so regulated." He drew the blushing Selina to his bosom, and affectionately saluting her, begged her to forgive him.

"It is I who must forgive this flirting," said Marian. "Positively, Henry, I must take this girl away—you are spoiling her."

"She is like yourself," said Brooks, "not to be spoiled."

Marian, accompanied by our heroine, retired to the nursery, and Cecil prepared to visit sir Eldred; but in passing the gallery, he just stopped to ask our heroine from what inn Agnes dated her letter? Selina referred to it.

“ Ah, Selina, you may suffer persecution—shew mercy,” said Marian. “ Frank would willingly *dine* on that fair sheet of paper.”

Selina resigned the letter, and under a strong conviction that she was at that moment feeling something like persecution, hastened to the nursery, where, in play with the children, her ideas associated the object of her persecution with the innocent companions of her present amusement.

CHAP. II.

—————“ Rumour is a pipe,
Blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures ;
And of so easy and so plain a stop,
That the blind monster, with uncounted heads,
The still discordant wav’ring multitude,
Can play upon ’t.”

“ I wish,” said Selina, “ that I could consider Brooks’s eulogium on my country-

women as correct as liberal ; but, indeed, Marian, in my short sojourn amongst the great world, I see a great deal to condemn—much to improve.”

“ It must ever be so,” said Marian, “ while prejudices and egotism are so prevalent. The latter is a feeling of which no human being is wholly destitute. I think it is possible to moderate it, so as to prevent its jaundicing our minds, to the exclusion of the noblest movement of the soul—sympathy. Self-love, if immoderately encouraged, is the opiate that deadens every refined, every generous sentiment, wraps the heart in torpid security, causing every object to be seen through the eye of prejudice. Our countrywomen, Selina, are, nevertheless, in many respects, emulative beings. Talents, beauty, and virtue, adorn many, but they are the slaves of opinion, of fashion. This is an unpardonable weakness. I have seen wives and mothers of exemplary worth, whom the breath of slander never reached, receive at their parties women of opposite characters.

Ask them, 'Why?' 'Why, they are generally received.' 'By whom?' 'Why, the duchess of ——, and my lady ——.' 'Are they your models in private life?' 'No,' said lady Robert, to whom I made these remarks, after seeing a very elevated, yet, according to my idea, improper person at her assembly. 'What can I do?' said her ladyship; 'lord Robert and —— are friends. He would be offended, if I omitted her.' 'Indeed!' said I: 'pardon me, lord Robert is, perhaps, estimated by —— as a soldier—friends they never could be; let Fitzowen be satisfied by his public notice, nor be ambitious of receiving him at his parties.' 'You are dreadfully moral,' said lady Robert; 'why, my rooms would never fill, if it were not in my power to announce such an honour.' 'Tell me,' said I, 'if you would receive any other woman, who stood thus situated with a man of inferior rank?' 'Horrible! don't name it,' said lady Robert. I smiled at a distinction so tinselled, a blindness so wilful. 'What would become of me, Ma-

rian,' said her ladyship, 'if I were to set up as a reformer in such a particular?' 'I should hope every thing,' said I; 'for, as your ladyship is considered as a brilliant star in the hemisphere of fashion, you might, perhaps, bring decency into repute.' 'It is too much for me,' said her ladyship; 'I could not venture it.' 'Admirable sophistry!' said I; 'it is too much for you to attempt doing right, but the easiest thing in the world to adopt a silly (to call it no worse) notoriety.'

"I must own," said our unfashionable heroine, "that I could not reconcile the incongruities of a very recent party in which I mixed. Agreeably to an established and respectful custom, every body rose at the entrance of a superior visitor. With a grace peculiarly his own, he addressed the lady of the mansion, and, in a comprehensive salute, the whole of the assembly; but, soon after, I perceived a fashionable vocalist honoured by his attentions, and ultimately led to an instrument to perform, &c. Surely such condescen-

sion is not exactly the proper line for so great a person? It may be said that humility ennobles—when offered at the shrine of virtue, however humble, it assuredly does; but to one whose private character exhibits immorality, whose vices are supported at the expence of the faithful wife and respectable family, it is a marked insult. To encourage talents, is, and should be, the characteristic of a great nation; but when we pay for those talents, let them be *offered* with diffidence, and *received* with the due meed of *qualified* applause. I would not disgrace the hallowed laurel, by placing it on the brow of the syren of song; or, to procure the most delectable musical feast, make my table the bacchanalian's resort; it is inimical to my idea of right, in every point of view."

"You would be termed a most aristocratical being," said Marian, "were such sentiments known."

"It is the aristocracy of virtue," said Selina. "I would, in trivial as in essential

points, make a woman of honour systematic; she should be above being warped by the seductions of fashion, and firm enough to give example in such particulars as reason approved."

"Ambition," replied Marian, "is so predominant in the human bosom, that, greatly as a few might admire a conduct so inestimable, it would never be found an efficient stimulus to the many, because a circle, yet above the rank of nobility, gives the colour to the times. If the qualities which nature bestowed on this exalted central point, for the glimmering imitators of luxury to aim at, had been called into action, how proudly might this favoured isle have held a distinguished advantage in moral manners as in every other conspicuous blessing! But the illustrious pair, whose lives are the theme of every reflecting mind, receive from the multitude the homage due to their rank only, while their virtues, from being retired, burn as dim lights before the vivid eye of butterfly observation."

“What would be the punishment we should merit,” said Selina, “if this our bold censure were breathed in the sphere of fashion?”

“Nothing less than banishment,” said Marian.

“I could soon become a voluntary exile,” sighed our heroine.

“Was that a worldly or an individual sigh?” asked Marian.

“It was a very comprehensive one,” said Selina, “and, I believe, a blended one,” smiling.

“Ah! why, my beloved girl!” said Marian, “why am I forced to yield up opinions and hopes, that had been so long tenants of my bosom as to be given up with sincere regret?”

“You must feel every assurance, every hope, more than realized in the amiable object of Frank’s solicitude,” said Selina; “and my incapacity, in an engagement so important, must reconcile you, if the worth of the charming Agnes were not put in opposition.”

“ There is a directing Power,” said Marian, “ and I knew what the sentiments of my father would be in such circumstances; I well remember his equanimity and resignation.”

“ Now, Marian, you make my feelings acute,” said Selina; “ for it is there I blush to be recognised as the fluctuating child of caprice.”

“ Do not wrong him,” said Marian; “ remember his character, the dignified humility of which is but exceeded by his liberality of soul. No, Selina, he will lose his regrets in the generous applause that your candour demands—I will make you smile,” continued Marian, as she pulled the check-string, and ordered her carriage to Manchester-square; “ you shall contemplate a new and amusing scene.”

They alighted at a handsome mansion. On entering the drawing-room, our heroine was received by the lady sitting, who apologized for her position, by directing Miss Asgill's attention to the cause. It appeared an interesting one to our heroine.

Mrs. Hanthin was gracefully bending over a sweet baby of ten months old, who reclined on her bosom, while four or five fine children were disposed in a variety of picturesque attitudes around her, all apparently artlessly engaged.

“ This,” thought Selina, “ is indeed a novel scene ! but it does not amuse, it delights me.”

Scarcely had she time to do justice to her admiration of so lovely a group, ere colonel Stratton was announced. A few minutes brought him to her side. The approving smile that played on her countenance as she viewed Mrs. Hanthin’s family, needed no interpretation with colonel Stratton.

“ You view this scene,” said the colonel, “ with all the enthusiasm of youth—you attach to it all the virtue that such an appearance justifies. We must not be the dupes of circumstance—‘ *All is not gold that glitters.*’ Let us look on this matronly assumption dispassionately for a short time, and then Miss Asgill will divest me of my present cynical appearance.”

She was going to reply, when colonel Stratton added—"No apology, my dear madam; that never-failing index of your mind has spoken most eloquently. You think me severe, not to say censorious."

"I think you wrong," said Selina; "and am myself deceived; a scene like this I should have thought peculiarly adapted to your feelings."

"You do me justice," said the colonel; "*in reality* this would please me."

Selina looked sceptically.

"How are you, my sweet friend?" said a voice, whom Selina, at the same moment, recognised to be Mrs. Swivel.

She returned a constrained sort of acknowledgment to the familiar hypocrite, who, undismayed, drew a seat next to our heroine, and harangued with her usual volubility. "Mrs. Hanthin is a charming creature," said she: "don't you admire the costume of the rooms? Egyptian costume and Grecian fascination!"

Selina looked surprised.

"And Roman imitation," said the colo-

nel; "the English Gracchii," looking towards Mrs. Hanthin.

"Aye, it has a pretty effect," said Swivel; "it was fitted up at great expence."

"Of what are you speaking," said the colonel. "Not of its mistress?" said he, regarding her attentively.

"None of your inquisitorial scrutinies," said Swivel; "you know, colonel, I cannot stand them."

"I am glad I know my power," said he.

"You are thoughtful, Miss Asgill," said Swivel, who shrunk from the colonel's penetration. "Come, be ingenuous; is it our lady governess's prospect of exaltation; or the sudden arrival of that spruce son of the church, Mr. Cecil?"

"Neither," said Selina, coolly.

"Were you not astonished at Berriton's perseverance?" asked Swivel; "but he has not returned yet; I am still an unbeliever."

"I can believe that," said our heroine, with a provoking smile.

"The Wilmots are all *derangée* at the idea," said Swivel.

“ With two exceptions,” interjoined colonel Stratton.

“ Yes ; I think it was Mr. Wilmot and Harriet, who thought it a most wise thing in my lord ; but poor Isabella, that sweet girl, is doomed to disappointment !”

“ Spare your friend, madam,” said Selina, in a low voice ; “ consider Miss Wilmot’s feelings.”

“ Feelings !” said Swivel ; “ they are the last things she considers with any one : and, indeed, you must pardon me, Miss Asgill, I cannot understand your character. Either your extreme youth has made you a slave to the opinions of the moral Mrs. Brooks, or you are in actual training for the church.”

“ My motives, madam, will, I trust, always bear the scrutiny of those who are authorized to question them,” said Selina ; “ and while I avow this, I do not hesitate to say that your perseverance in seeking to learn motives and effects, in which you can have no concern, is really surprising to me.”

“ You are not an every-day sort of girl, I perceive,” said Swivel.

Selina turned from the bold flatterer, and, extending her hand, motioned one of the little group to advance. The child looked anxiously, but seemed afraid to quit her post.

“ Now you are astonished,” said Swivel, glad to find an opportunity of making her peace. “ Do you know, my sweet novice, that these poor little urchins are as much fatigued as the weary centinel can be; nay, more, for he may use his eyes; but these young slaves are tutored, even to the movement of their eyes; they are to look affection and humble duty. See the sleeping Caroline; poor dear! it will be a fortunate circumstance for her, if she escapes punishment for this grand omission.”

Selina viewed her informer incredulously.

Colonel Stratton did not contradict it, though he did not join in the conversation.

“ Swivel,” said Mrs. Hanthin, “ your taste is in high estimation. Mrs. Brooks is admiring the costume of my rooms.”

“ I am flattered,” said Swivel; “ you think them becoming, ma’am ?”

“ Becoming !” said Marian, “ I think them elegant, and well arranged.”

“ Then you do not perceive my design in their hangings and furniture ?”

“ Not exactly,” said Marian, as she took a more accurate survey of the apartments.

“ Observe, my dear madam, the *jonquille*, as a morning room, is divinely becoming ; its interesting shade gives a *tendresse* quite enchanting to my elegant friend. Her matronly elegancies are greatly heightened by the costume altogether. While this,” (as she extended a folding-door, to admit a more distinct view of an adjoining room) is the very *acmé* of evening lustre ; the roseate hue giving all the brilliancy of extreme hilarity and enthusiastic delight, when all one’s very dear friends encircle one.”

“ Admirably explained !” said colonel Stratton, “ making all the luxurious advances of fashion appear what they really are, *refined deceptions*. But how, upon this

system of becoming apartments, &c. do you reconcile a downright simple walk in the air, where the carpetting is already spread, and the sun will shine in spite of fashion?"

"Why, one is forced to put up with that," said Swivel, "at times; yet a woman of rank never walks but at Brighton, or some such place, where beings of a superior order keep her in countenance."

"Why, as you observe, madam, I have seen a few of the very finest order of fine forms, in the hope of obtaining a passing salute, exert themselves by such vulgar exercise for a much longer period than a more reasonable distinction could induce in them."

"Colonel, you are absolutely horrifying," said Mrs. Hanthin; "I should like to know what class of people you do respect?"

"Your sex, collectively," said the colonel, bowing, "have my respect; but I own some reserves in my esteem: some (and he was pointed in his glances) there are, who excite admiration, yet they cause

regrets that a conduct, which is the offspring of enlightened nature, should not be a general characteristic of Nature's beautiful family."

"Fashion is of more youthful date," said Swivel, "and you, colonel, have the reputation of appreciating youth highly."

"I should be sorry to be insensible to any blessing that, as a human being, I am benefited by contemplating; and the youthful character is a study in which I indulge."

Swivel viewed him with an effrontery that she meant should awe him into confusion; on the contrary, he appeared to particular advantage, animated and benevolent, and perfectly indifferent to her malice.

"He is a horrid creature," said she, in a whisper to Selina. "See, now he has gone to the tables, not a book but he will criticise—It is so provoking!—Really he is a very immoral man."

"Is he?" said Selina.

"Terrible!" said Swivel. "He and sir Edward Montgomery are two of the worst men about town."

Selina blushed deeply.

“ Dear me, Miss Asgill,” said Swivel, “ are you so sensitive as to feel the errors of your friends so poignantly ? You must endeavour to get rid of these suspicious tell-tales ; what would the young parson say ? ”

“ He would pity me just now,” said Selina, looking significantly.

“ And he seems to pity Miss Melvin too,” said Swivel, sarcastically. “ Here is Hanthin, I declare ! ” she continued, rising to meet a tall, fashionable-looking man, who entered at that moment.

“ How are ye ?—how are ye ? ” said he, throwing himself at full length on a couch. “ Where is Brooks ? I never see him ; he is always at that devilish house of commons. Colonel, what the devil are you about, quizzing Eliza’s literary arrangements ? Swivel, where did you come from ?—ho ! what, Wilmot is convalescent, and you shift quarters ? Upon my soul, madam—I beg your pardon,” rising, and re-

clining on one elbow, with his glass to his eye, "I did not perceive, till this moment, that (and he rose and placed himself by the side of our heroine) I was so highly honoured. I have seen you before (still using his glass); I was one of the unfortunate fellows who could not overtake your hat in Kensington Gardens.—Ha! I perceive you recollect it (observing the confusion of Selina.) Did not you think me a monstrous bore that day?"

"I was too much engrossed by my own situation, ~~sr~~," said our heroine, "to notice any thing beside."

"Aye, aye, I suppose so. Poor Berri-ton, he was cursedly out that morning; while your agile graces fascinated me to the spot, he was contrasting you with the modern Cleopatra."

"Sir!" said Selina, astonished at such an address, where assurance and gallantry were so unblushingly evident.

"I perceive you are new to town. Mrs. Brooks, you have not introduced me to

your fair friend," said Mr. Hanthin, starting on his feet; "I pray you, lady, lead me to the divine insensible."

"You did not appear to require my offices just now," said Marian; "but you have been talking to Miss Asgill."

"Miss Asgill!" said Mr. Hanthin, advancing in a beseeching attitude; "forgive me, dearest madam; this is a happiness for which I have long sighed."

"I protest, Charles, you distress Miss Asgill," said Mrs. Hanthin. "Do not mind him, my dear—it is his usual way."

Selina smiled faintly; she could not reconcile such puppyism in the husband, or indifference in the wife. The interest of Mrs. Hanthin's maternal character was fading before her observation. She had seen the playful fingers of the laughing little cherub roughly repressed, when its infantine ardour either discomposed the dress, or moved the gorgon ringlets of its fashionable nurse. At length the patience of the matron was roused, and she hastily shook the innocent offender, and ordered the

nursery bell to be rung. Selina rose, her bosom swelling with compassion for the culprit. She took the child from the arms of the mother, and had regained her seat before she had considered the impropriety of her interference. Colonel Stratton, in silence, observed this additional trait of nature in her character, while Hanthin, with a suppressed sigh, exclaimed—"Divinely amiable!"

"Miss Asgill," said Mrs. Hanthin, "I can see that you are a nursery favourite; but I fear you would spoil the little folks."

"I hope not, madam," said Selina, "though I believe my fondness for them sometimes leads me into error."

Mrs. Hanthin bowed to the apology.

Hanthin viewed the child through his glass. "How the urchin stares!" said he.

"Perhaps he knows, and expects your notice, sir."

"It must be by instinct then, for I never saw it till yesterday."

"Never saw it!" said Marian; "you are jesting."

“ No, he is very correct,” said his lady,
“ he never did.”

Marian was silent. To relieve the awkwardness that her remark had occasioned, our heroine, turning to her fashionable neighbour, said—“ Do I see all your family now, sir ?”

“ Upon my soul I cannot tell, madam, but I will ask Eliza.—Have we any more children in the nursery ?”

“ No, my dear—yes, there is poor George.”

“ I thought I could not answer exactly,” said he ; “ but I do not attend to them while young ; I hate them when they squall.”

“ Indeed !” said Selina, and she checked the sigh that hovered in her breath.

“ Eliza, do dispatch your jewels, my love ; you must be fatigued to death.”

“ You may go,” said Mrs. Hanthin.

The children with one effort scrambled on their legs. Marian, who understood the farce, now noticed them. The child whom our heroine had wooed to her side.

embraced the first moment of her liberty to shew her gratitude. Colonel Stratton left the book-table to play with the children.

“No noise,” said Mrs. Hanthin, with a look and gesture that seemed to terrify her victims.

“Your hair curls very pretty,” said the little girl; “may I touch your ringlets?”

“Certainly,” said our heroine.

“Oh! papa, look here; what a beautiful curl! and it is quite fast.”

“Admirable!” said Mr. Hanthin; “upon my soul, Eliza, this girl will soon find you out,” and he kissed the little betrayer of secrets with rapture.

“You are too obliging, sir,” said Mrs. Hanthin, piqued; “but as you lavish your regards at a time when you should censure severely, it is fit that objects so incapable of discerning should be removed from your presence.—Go to the nursery; go,” continued Mrs. Hanthin, her natural temper glowing through her rouge.

“Go, go, go, to a nunnery, go!”

said Hanthin, laughing.

The children disappeared in an instant, while Selina, who yet held the infant on her lap, looked discomposed, yet undecided how to act.

“ You must be tired,” said Hanthin, taking the child from our heroine.

Mrs. Hanthin perfectly shrieked with surprise. “ Well, Charles, miracles will never cease ! Hear it, my friends, he has not committed such an unfashionable *tendresse* for four years ! Nay, Charles, do not attempt a vindication. You know, when Caroline was a month old, I sent for you to see her on the christening day ; you took your glass, and scanned her for a moment ; ‘ what great eyes the creature has ! ’ said you, and, since that time, you never have seen your children till they were ten months old. Yesterday was Gilbert’s first introduction to his papa.”

“ Well, then, I am in arrears with the boy,” said Hanthin, “ and must make up for the lost time.”

“ Lost, indeed ! ” said Marian ; “ you

know not what you have sacrificed, in suffering this sweet boy to remain a stranger to you. I have often thought that their ardent notice, before the power of utterance is granted them, is an indelible feeling that their first words sanctify; a parent's name is generally the first accent they breathe, and what can equal its mellifluous sound!"

"Nothing," said Swivel, "excepting this charming ode emphatically read."

An unanimous smile was the first reply to this strange interruption. The fact is, Swivel knew her ground, and that any interference, while Mrs. Hanthin was warmed by her subject, would displace her from her present asylum. Mr. Wilmot had that morning politely dispensed with her residence in his house. What were his motives for an apparent breach of hospitality, shall find place in our narrative, ere we close it. It was necessary to fix her attention to something, and a pocket volume of Mr. Antonio Zephyr's Poems falling in her

way, she had been partly absorbed in them, but not so deeply but that she knew when to join in the conversation.

“Come, Miss Asgill,” said Swivel, “you do not want energy or expression—read this;” and she offered the volume to our heroine.

“I must decline the attempt, though qualified by your encouraging praise,” said Selina. “I could not read before company, and never should attempt poetry till I had studied my author a little.”

“Zephyr is the most comprehensive creature in the world,” said Swivel.

“He is wonderfully simple and easy,” said Mrs. Hanthin; “don’t you like his style, Miss Asgill?”

“I do not, madam,” said Selina.

“Very prudish, Miss Asgill, very prudish,” said Swivel. “Do you know, that a prude is always suspected of considering her subject more deeply than an artless, thoughtless girl, who dashes through a volume without understanding a syllable of it?”

“ In the present case,” said colonel Stratton, “ it is my sincere wish, that all who read this volume may be of Mrs. Swivel’s class of artless girls, who do not understand a syllable of their author ; but my cordial admiration must be given to the ingenuous, and, according to my idea, artless woman, who, while her delicacy condemns the adoption of a fashionable opinion, has the modest courage to avow her disapprobation.”

“ I must thank you,” said Selina ; “ for, indeed, colonel, Mrs. Swivel’s *badinage* does sometimes overcome my rustic confidence.”

“ Poor dear !” said Swivel, ironically, “ you are the first woman that ever told me so.”

“ But they might think so,” said the colonel.

“ Humph !” said Swivel. “ Colonel, you are a most ungallant man ; you cannot be the champion of one without satirizing the community.”

“ If only one in a community claim my

esteem, the rest make the obloquy they revile."

"Positively, Miss Asgill, I must be of opinion, that the retiredness of your education could alone make you reject the poetry of Zephyr," said Mrs. Hanthin. "He is, believe me, the most fascinating and charming of poets; and, you know, what our grandmamas might have thought very naughty, we, who live in the age of reason, may with propriety adopt."

"And why, madam?" said Selina, with modest firmness.

"Why!" said Mrs. Hanthin, "because—because this is the age of reason."

Selina smiled—"I see," said she, with a playful archness, "that we have not advanced one iota in the aborigines of reason; for a woman's motive is always founded on this explicative conjunction."

Mrs. Hanthin smiled too, because she had not a reply ready made.

"But, my dear madam," said Mr. Hanthin, with affected languor, "surely you

can adduce no reason against the present enlightened mode of education, or convert us to the belief, that our grandmothers were as eloquent and fascinating as the present race of divinities?"

"Your opinions are fixed, sir, no doubt," said Selina, "and——"

"Oh no! upon my soul, I have no fixed principle," said Hanthin, "and a new system is my delight. If you will take the trouble to convert me, I will with pleasure fall in love with my grandmother's opinions."

"In contradiction to reason?" said Selina.

"That I must deny," said colonel Stratton; "for if Hanthin listened to your arguments, he would have reasons for such an acquiescence."

"Positively, colonel, you old bachelors are the most daringly scandalous creatures in the world," said Swivel.

"We rank next to the widows in this respect," said colonel Stratton, gaily.

“ Before us,” said Swivel. “ Well, well, rumour does not spare you, sir, believe me.”

“ Rumour is a many-headed monster, madam.”

“ Pray, colonel, which of you two are to bear away the prize from the neighbourhood of Piccadilly?—the fair *incog.* to whom Montgomery and you are so unremitting in your attentions?”

Selina blushed; though she felt a just indignation towards the scandal-monger, she could not hear the name of sir Edward without emotion.

“ I see no reason,” said Marian, (endeavouring to check the progress of Swivel), “ why this sweet babe should sleep out of its usual comfortable abode; and Miss Asgill must be tired.”

The infant had actually fallen asleep in the arms of our heroine, and the enlightened mother had totally forgot the slumbering innocent.

“ Cruel, cruel Mrs. Brooks!” said Han-

thin; "how could you devise so cruel a deprivation of my optic admiration?"

Swivel rang the nursery bell, and the infant's departure followed.—"You have no idea," said Swivel, "what an elegant cradle I have invented for the young countess of Huntmore."

"Describe it, Swivel, describe it," said Mrs. Hanthin; "give me the *fac simile*."

"Pardon me, my most dear friend," said Swivel, "I cannot do that; it would be the most ungenerous thing imaginable: two countesses, and one young duchess in embryo, have already supplicated me for the skeleton of it, but I could not; no, I have positively promised my enchanting little Huntmore that she shall run it for a month; though, *entre nous*," added Swivel, in a low voice, "I should be more than astonished if she ever has occasion for it."

"Have not you a patent for this invention," said colonel Stratton, "on the old plan?"

"I do not comprehend you, sir," said

Swivel, with a look that evinced her perfect understanding of the allusion.

“On the medical plan,” said the colonel.

“It is admirably compact,” said Swivel, turning her back on colonel Stratton; “you might take it in a carriage or curri-
cle; and so light, that the most fragile form could sustain it.”

“How interesting it would look!” said Mrs. Hanthin, tenderly. “I must have the pattern, my dear Swivel.”

“Eliza,” said Mr. Hanthin, “remember I admit no such frock-baskets into any vehicle that I occupy.”

“Oh! I forgot, my love,” replied Mrs. Hanthin, “the act of attainder against mere infants.”

“I am tempted in this instance,” said Marian, “to applaud the prohibition of Mr. Hanthin, as I really fear that the sumptuous cradle, and its incomplete structure, might endanger the lives of its lovely inmates.”

“Prejudice, prejudice, my dear ma-

dam," said Swivel. "I thank Fortune that you are not the orb round which the fashionable world revolve."

"I am most grateful for it," said Marian, coolly.

"Would to Heaven you were!" said colonel Stratton; "then might the matronly character bear the opposition that our grandmothers' sober qualifications inspired."

"How well you preach, colonel!" said Swivel; "if your practice were as correct,

"We scarce should look upon your like again."

"I trust my errors stand confest," said colonel Stratton; "and seriously, madam, I feel your censure as praise."

"Well, that is good-natured," said Swivel.

At this moment Mrs. Arcot was announced. Our heroine, whose recollection of her was in no way flattering, wore no smiles of cordiality. Mrs. Arcot, like the proud steed who bears his neck erect, looked over the company with haughty brows,

then flinging herself on a sofa, declared herself fatigued with attending surveys of fashions.

"It is inconceivably distressing," said Mrs. Hanthin; "yet what can one do in London in a morning?"

"Don't you find it quite laborious?" said Mrs. Arcot, addressing our heroine.

"I do not subject myself to its inconvenience," said Selina.

"Really!" said Mrs. Arcot, arching her brows. "Pray, how do you pass your mornings?"

"In various ways," said Selina, smiling.

"Yet this is your first winter in London," said Mrs. Arcot. (Selina bowed.)

"I have visited all the morning lounges," she added, "but would not do such penance as to make them a daily practice."

"What can you possibly do at home all the morning?" said Mrs. Hanthin.

"I'll wager a trifle that you read a chapter in the Bible every morning," said Swi-

vel, with a look that meant to express sovereign contempt.

“ You have, at last, allowed me to answer you affirmatively,” said Selina.

The ladies glanced at each other.

“ And do you own it ?” said Swivel.

“ Most unhesitatingly,” said Selina, “ and proudly, I may add.”

“ Well, to be sure, custom is every thing, or else it is certainly a most unusual practice for a woman of fashion, and an heiress.”

“ Custom,” said Selina, “ shall never make me the first ; and as fate has caused me to be the latter, I know no habit so likely to stem the approaches of pride and supine security, as a regular resort to the volume you have named, madam ; even though I should omit to name that its perusal has been emphatically recommended.”

Swivel hemmed, and looked foolish, while Mrs. Hanthin and Mrs. Arcot smiled significantly. Mr. Hanthin, from his predilection to new systems, might have been

induced to take part in the conversation, but that, unfortunately, this subject had never been considered by him, either as a sceptic or believer.

Colonel Stratton, whose silent admiration had been given to the sentiments of our heroine, advanced to the table on which Mrs. Hanthin's literary taste was displayed, and took a volume in his hand. "Come," said he, "let me be the Christie of the hour. First, ladies, allow me to recommend a work of extensive celebrity, that for luxuriance of style, richness of fancy, and elegant poesy, is scarcely to be equalled ; the ———"

"Ah ! we have read it," said the ladies, excepting Marian and our Selina.

"Humph !" said the *ci-devant* Christie. "Here are the soul-harrowing horrors of —— Castle, which, for temerity of terrification and enchanting obscurity, is universally resorted to in all cases of *ennui* and tender depression ! Next, I present to your notice the inestimable little *bonne bouche* of the discerning Mrs. Swivel's ado-

ration, the Sonnets, Odes, and Love Songs of Antonio Zephyr."

"Charming! charming!" repeated the fair trio.

"Blair's Sermons," said Christie, and he looked inquisitively.

"Admirable!" said Marian and Selina, while Swivel and her copartners shrugged their shoulders, not venturing a tacit dissent to a book bearing such a title.

"The —— of St. ——," said the satirical valuer, "where *la belle passion* is so feelingly depicted, its colourings so animated, so brilliant, and all from the Circean pen of a female."

"It is exquisitely enchanting," said the aforesaid *coterie*. Marian and our heroine were silent.

"Again, by the same fair hand, the ——, where historical dryness is attenuated by the sublime touches of the all-subduing power of love."

"Terribly tedious in parts, yet beautifully tender in others," said the ladies.

“It is a work of infinite merit, I believe, colonel?” said Mrs. Brooks.

“Its facts are the result of learned researches, its fictions the ebullitions of an elegant fancy.”

“But I,” continued Marian, as a woman, cannot accord praise to a composition that calls a blush into my cheek; to fancied passion, fancied tendernesses are attached; real love may be ardent as sincere, but its expressions, like its feelings, should be moderately defined. In fact, a woman should not wield her pen to make a feeling that, under the guidance of delicacy, may make the happiness of her life the subject for the libertine to criticise, or the refined of her own sex to blush for.”

“I agree with you,” said the colonel, taking a seat: “your sex have, and continue to give such proofs of literary ability, that I feel disappointed when they labour to tell me what it were better their modesty concealed.”

“Then you think, perhaps,” said Mr.

Hanthin, "that there is some analogy between our modern costume and literature, as in the formality of the old school of our grandmothers, and the starched pedantry of their time?"

"This is certainly a transparent age," said the colonel, glancing at the children of fashion present; "but I am of opinion, we are now less acquainted with the hearts of our countrywomen than when they were cased in buckram; whether it is that their prodigality exposes them to the contagion of folly through a thousand flattering approaches, or that our sex, whose inconstancy was never doubted, are less assiduous to attach themselves where all may indiscriminately advance, I will not pretend to decide; yet, in a moral point of view, I am persuaded that the old school, and pedantry, as you term it, were more efficacious to the happiness of domestic life than modern philosophy and transparent drapery."

The blush that mantled on the cheeks of our heroine and her friend was viewed with astonishment by Mrs. Hanthin and Swivel.

It could not enter their imaginations that, having no cause to blush on their own accounts, they should spare them for their more fashionably-attired friends.

“Colonel,” said Hanthin, “you have given me a most delectable feast this morning ; I should have been quite at a loss for the recollection of the maiden’s blush bloom, had not your charming friend, Miss Asgill, displayed its various tints. Upon my soul, I shall begin to fall in love with nature again !”

“How intolerably insolent !” said Swivel. “Upon my word, you married men think you are licensed to say any thing.”

“To a widow we do,” said Hanthin, contemptuously.

“I have often wondered,” said Mrs. Hanthin, “that you never heighten your features by a little rouge,” addressing Marian.

“I don’t like the practice,” said Marian.

“Why, it is very innocent,” said Mrs. Arcot.

“It is a deception,” said Marian, “and

would disgrace me with my children, whom I am endeavouring to impress with the idea, that to deceive is criminal."

"Nor ornaments, my dear Mrs. Brooks," said Swivel; "you are almost a Quaker, I declare."

"It suits my fortune," said Marian, "and is, besides, congenial to my taste."

"Yet she has jewels, I will vouch for," said the colonel.

"Most brilliant ones," said Selina, (whose face glowed with ardour as she spoke), "set in a style of original beauty, reflecting rays of most dazzling lustre."

"I never saw them," said Swivel.

"She never wears them abroad," said the colonel.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Hanthin, "that is curious."

"My unfortunate Eliza," said Hanthin, "do you not perceive you have a cotemporary Gracchi?"

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Mrs. Hanthin; "really Miss Asgill entered so much into the

spirit of the metaphor, that I could not have imagined that any thing less than real jewels could have caused such energy."

"Selina, my dear, we must be gone," said Mrs. Brooks; "the day is passing imperceptibly."

"One word, madam," said Mrs. Arcot, addressing Selina; "you know the young person that was with the Wilmot family—can you tell me if lord Berriton has actually offered himself to her?"

"I cannot positively reply to you, madam," said Selina. "I am honoured by Miss Melvin's friendship. Lord Berriton has followed her into Berkshire, as I hear, for that purpose."

"Most astonishing!" said Mrs. Arcot. "My lord is of an ancient family; the peerage makes most honourable mention of his name; and she——"

"Is of the nobility of virtue, madam," interrupted colonel Stratton.

"Yes, ladies, we shall have the humble governess return a peeress," said Swivel. "The man's a fool, I verily believe."

"I always thought him so till now," said the colonel.

"I sincerely hope she will not accept the hand of his lordship," said Marian.

"Can you think she will be so silly?" said Mrs. Hanthin.

"I trust she will," said Marian; "as a family I am acquainted with are most anxious to receive her as an ornament to it."

"Are they of rank?" said Mrs. Arcot.

"Of intrinsic worth, madam," said Selina.

"And do you know so little of your sex," said Swivel, "as to believe a little paltry miss would refuse a handsome young peer and a title?"

"I have no such acquaintance, madam," said Selina.

"She ought to be devilish clever, and cursedly handsome, to trap such a dasher as Berriton; for he has been on very high terms with half the women of fashion in London," said Hanthin.

"You have made her eulogium," said colonel Stratton; "the loftiness of her virtue, and delicacy of her manners, have

subdued the libertine mania of lord Berri-ton, and taught him to discriminate between innocence and vice."

"She is not married yet," said Swivel.

"Rumour gives Harriet Wilmot to you, colonel," said Mrs. Arcot, and she laughed sarcastically.

"Rumour, in this instance, steps aside from her usual malice of character, and honours me by her voice."

Both Marian and our heroine marked the countenance of colonel Stratton, which wore a suffusion not usual to its mild expression.

"Now, ladies," said the colonel, "do you purpose to cross examine these witnesses further?"

"We must be brought up on some other day," said Selina, "for I see my friend Mrs. Brooks is thinking of her jewels."

"A rare girl, upon my soul!" said Hanthin, jumping up, and seizing the hand of our heroine to lead her to the carriage.

Colonel Stratton led Mrs. Brooks. "I leave my character in your hands, dear

Swivel," said he, looking irresistibly arch at the consummate hypocrite; "spare me, I beseech you!"

"What an enchanting child of nature!" said Hanthin, as he placed our heroine in the chariot.

"Isn't he a terrible madcap?" said Mrs. Hanthin from the balcony.

Selina smiled a reply.

Colonel Stratton laughed unreservedly.

"Can we put you down, colonel?" said Marian.

"It is too tempting an inference," said he, as he placed himself by his fair companions.

"Is it scandal, colonel," said Marian, "to say that I brought Miss Asgill here for the purpose of amusing her?"

"Not near so scandalous as if you had said she was to be entertained; the one was certain, the other a satire."

"I cannot but smile," said Selina, "at the idea of the Gracchi calling her husband a madcap—it seems such a mistaken association of ideas, so absurd, so ridiculous."

"Then am I no cynic," said the colonel.

"Your pardon, sir; I was deceived by the first view of so interesting an assemblage, but I was soon converted to your opinions; and Mrs. Swivel kindly helped my imperfect observations."

"What a pest to society that woman is!" said the colonel. "A *fracas* of a delicate nature expelled her from the house of my friend Wilmot, whose convalescence will, I trust, enable him to curb the irascible disposition of the tyrant Isabella, and redress the injuries of his more amiable Harriet."

"I am most anxious to make an interest in that sweet girl's regard," said Selina, "but have not courage to avow my selection in Miss Wilmot's presence; yet, now Swivel has departed, I think I will brave the danger."

"Suppose I," said colonel Stratton, pressing the hand of our heroine, "were to bring her through the rocks and quicksands of Isabella's temper, would you receive her as a friend from my hands?"

“ It would increase her value, if possible,” said Selina ; “ and I should be most grateful to you.”

Colonel Stratton looked as if he would be grateful too. “ To-morrow morning, then, Miss Asgill, if you can dedicate an hour to a new acquaintance”

“ Most chearfully,” said Selina.

Colonel Stratton recollected that he must call in Bond-street, and begged to be put down.

“ Stratton likes Harriet Wilmot,” said Mrs. Brooks.

Our heroine coincided in opinion. “ I should rejoice,” said she, “ to see it mutual. The colonel is a most amiable man, and the disparity of their years would be less glaring with her than almost any female of her age, she is so gentle, so unobtrusive.”

“ The colonel,” said Marian, “ is calculated to form a domestic fireside with judgment as well as elegance.”

Our heroine, on arriving in Grosvenor-square, found she had but a few minutes

for her toilet ; but, in those moments, the words of Swivel, as pointed at Montgomery, rose on her memory. Yet the next moment crushed the calumny ; for had she not implicated colonel Stratton in her communication ?—yes ; and he was one of Nature's most amiable family : and she descended to the dining-room, if not free from disquiet, yet, at least, more happy than while her bosom owned a decided preference for one, and was, by every rule of honour and of sentiment, the affianced bride of another.

CHAP. III.

—————“ Virtue does still
With scorn the mercenary world regard,
Where abject souls do good, and hope reward.
Above the worthless trophies man can raise,
She seeks not honour, wealth, nor airy praise,
But with herself, herself the goddess pays.”

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To rise early, explore a wood, and meet
a lover, are the usual designations for a he-

roine; but as we are to speak of a second in rank, we must not infringe on our Selina's prerogative. Agnes Melvin, whom we left to repose after her very sudden journey, no sooner beheld the orb of day beaming through her window, than, with a chastened feeling of pious regret, she arose, and equipping herself in her travelling dress, stole lightly down the staircase, and, with a beating heart, took the path to the churchyard. A simple, yet very beautiful structure had been raised over the remains of the amiable Melvin. His weeping child, with many a fond recollection clinging to her heart, contemplated its beauty. Her sister, her darling Ellen!—ah! could she view this unsought tribute to their virtuous parent! and her eye sought the well-known habitation of the delicate friend, whose liberality had deemed such a proof of remembrance and esteem indispensable.

The dew yet “glittered on the thorn” that grew near the base, “the lark's shrill notes” seemed to bear her mental prayers to Him who alone could hear them. An

hour had imperceptibly passed in unobtrusive sorrow, when, fearing her absence might create uneasiness, she arose to depart. On a stile, a few paces from the tomb, she leaned to take a farewell look at the parsonage. She observed the thrifty housekeeper busied in her morning's employ. Its absent master claimed a grateful sigh, and, with tears yet lingering on her cheek, she turned towards the dwelling of her friends. A sudden footstep behind her caused a momentary alarm. Turning hastily round, she beheld, with astonishment, lord Berriton was the unexpected cause.

"Most amiable of women," said his lordship, "pardon this intrusion. I learned from the servant of doctor Adams that you had walked this path."

"Then I wish, my lord, as you were acquainted with my visit, you had allowed it to be solitary," said Agnes.

"Cruel, cruel girl!" said lord Berriton; "the pride of my life would be to steal all sorrow from you."

“ My lord, this language, and in such a place !” said Agnes.

“ Let us,” said lord Berriton, “ return to the tomb of your parent ; let me, before the silent witness of his worth, avow that a love as pure as mine

“ Angels might hear, and infidels adore !”

Agnes viewed his lordship with an expression of mild penetration. No affectation, no gesture accompanied his words ; and though the hyperbole of his language was ill assorted to the solemnity of the place, it was no stretch of fancy, but a usual mode with his lordship.

They had proceeded some distance before Miss Melvin recollected that her companion had been at the doctor’s.—“ Do you know my friend doctor Adams, my lord ?” asked Agnes.

“ I look to the happiness of being introduced to him by you,” said lord Berriton.

“ By me, my lord !”

“ Surely you have not condemned me

to despair? Did not my letter explain to you all the power of your charms?"

"I never received any letter from you, my lord," said Agnes; "and your lordship's knowledge of me has, by the very extraordinary and ineligible circumstances of my situation, been little advantageous. If you think, my lord, that my fallen fortunes and dependant estate leave me entirely exposed to the transient gallantry of the exalted of your sex, you are mistaken. I have friends."

"Ungenerous, cruel girl!" said lord Berriton; "does the world attach such infamy to my name, that you reject me on report? or have you decided from your own observation?"

"Reflect, my lord," said Agnes, impressively.

"I do remember. Accursed be that moment!" said lord Berriton. "Dear Agnes, I knew you not then."

"Nor now, my lord," she replied, "if you think a woman of honour forgets so wounding a dereliction to her honour."

“ I will not be condemned unheard,” said lord Berriton. “ Your sex have ever had my admiration ; my love is your’s ! Never, till your proud virtue awed my daring presumption, had I conceived that so much feminine firmness could attach to woman, more especially one, in whom the softness of her sex is so beauteously portrayed. I saw you unhappy, and placed in a situation derogatory to your feelings. (Agnes turned a look of inquiry on her companion.) Still hear me, madam,” said lord Berriton ; “ not the smallest part of that expression but my humbled soul can translate. In a moment of irritation, I lost sight of the respect due to your virtue, and indirectly told you where your sorrows were appreciated, and how anxious I was to remove you from so detestable an asylum. I grant that my manner was equivocal ; I submit to your scorn for that lapse from propriety. Alas ! if I judged imperfectly of you, how much did I wrong myself ! By Heaven ! madam, to protect you, to atone for my error by a life devoted to

your service, does but poorly express the insuperable power you hold on my heart ! Deign to share a fortune that will prove valueless without you. Doom me not to wretchedness and folly !”

“ My lord,” said Agnes, “ I accept your apology. I will not even deny you the applause that an offer so disinterested in point of fortune demands ; I feel it as a tribute to my wounded honour ; and though a more extensive return for your liberality is not in my power, I will henceforward consider your lordship with the respect that I must feel your due.”

“ You reject me then !” said lord Berri-ton ; “ Good Heavens !—and am I doomed to so deep a disappointment ?”

“ You will not consider it such in a short time,” said Agnes. “ In your own rank, my lord, some woman will be found to grace your selection, and honour your title.”

“ Never, madam,” said the mortified peer. “ You think my character so puerile, that

I have not stability enough to look above the hacknied haunts of notoriety."

"On the contrary," said Agnes, "I named those of a superior class."

"I comprehend you, madam," said Beriton; "a woman of fashion, an automaton, or a romp, who will spend my fortune, and wear my title, for no other reason than its giving her an honourable opportunity of being notorious."

"Is it possible, my lord," said Agnes, "that you satirize the higher classes of a sex to whom you have just avowed your devotion?"

"I hate a woman of fashion! No, madam, had you been, in the most remote particular, like those vapid, useless beings, with all your charms, I could have looked on you as a stoic."

Agnes, who could not have imagined that so much of rationality was blended in the character of her lover, whom she had seen idolized by those very beings he was thus depreciating, though she regarded his

profuse praise as somewhat beyond even a lover's lore, felt respect creep into her manners towards one whom she could have scarcely believed qualified to excite such a sentiment.

"May I ask," continued lord Berriton, with a voice of stifled pride, "if my disappointment takes rise in your hatred, or your previous engagements?"

"Neither, my lord," replied Agnes; "the first never influenced my breast, when your conduct might have justified a strong feeling; the latter, I have never yet considered seriously."

"Then why reject me?" said lord Berriton; "doom me to a probation, a servitude; even as Isaac for Rebecca bore a bondsman's life, so will I for the woman of my soul's election!"

"I could not make so poor a return for the liberality of your lordship's offer," said Agnes; "it is most probable I shall make no election."

"You love," said Berriton, regarding

the changing cheek of Agnes ; “ by Heaven ! some insensible idiot owns a treasure to which his torpid soul glows not. Oh, Agnes ! most beloved, most adored of women ! where are now my fairy prospects ? ”

“ Where áll chimeras should be,” said Agnes, “ given to oblivion. Your lordship’s future views will, I trust, be such as your friends will feel interest in ; and among lord Berriton’s sincere friends, Agnes Melvin does not hesitate to class herself.”

Lord Berriton bowed, but his disposition, naturally ardent, was not calculated to bear a decision so marked, so perfectly irremoveable. They had reached the garden that enclosed the house of doctor Adams. Agnes paused. “ I see your thoughts,” said he, “ but I must keep my appointment. I left word with the good doctor’s servant that I should require an hour’s audience. I was then full of hope, now I am sunk in despair. You will not deny me the honour of a short converse with your friend ? ”

“ Certainly not, my lord,” said Agnes.

She led the way to the breakfast-parlour of Mrs. Adams, who had been apprized, by old Jacob, that a lord had "comed post from Lunnun a'ter Miss Melvin; that he had followed her to the churchyard; and thinking," says Jacob, "that such a pretty girl might perhaps become a lady, I gived the poor old merchant his full character. My lord looked mainly pleased, and said, 'he must have an hour's talk wi master when he comed back.'"

Mrs. Adams thought Agnes deserving of the highest rank, yet as she believed her views were bounded, and her heart attached, she quietly placed an additional breakfast-cup on her table, fully persuaded that a social breakfast, and ten minutes passed in the library of the doctor, would check the hopes of his lordship, and set him on the road to London again.

Agnes, with a manner as unembarrassed as her feelings could command, introduced the peer to her friend. The entrance of the doctor, whose benignant nature shone in the most trivial of his actions, soon dis-

sipated the chagrin of his lordship, so as to make him affable and polite. The doctor and his partner viewed him through a partial medium. He had selected their favourite, and her sentiments in his favour were yet unknown to them. To the inquiries of lord Berriton concerning the inhabitants of L——, the doctor named Mrs. Manners and sir John Owen.

“ Mrs. Manners has a ward, has she not ? ”

The doctor replied in the affirmative.

“ I must certainly make her a call,” said lord Berriton ; “ lady Sophia is known to me.”

“ She is very handsome,” said Mrs. Adams.

“ She is merely handsome,” said lord Berriton.

“ A handsome heiress is a most attractive focus,” said Adams.

“ An ugly one stands on even ground with her,” said lord Berriton.

“ How, my lord ! ” said Mrs. Adams ; “ is not beauty the second consideration in high life ? ”

“ It is the first with many, madam,” said

lord Berriton ; “ but an heiress’s matrimonial rank is generally according to her acres ; and the sordid wretch who weds himself to land, has not refinement enough to appreciate personal advantage.”

“ Your sentiments are noble, my lord,” said Adams, “ yet there are exceptions. I know one heiress whose riches are her least endowment, whose humility heightens her character, and whose beauty is the very zenith of perfect loveliness. Perhaps you know the lovely woman ; I mean Miss Asgill.”

“ Perfectly. She is a divine girl, and did not every man raise in his mind’s eye the being that his fancy terms perfect, I, amongst others, should have sighed in the train of the elegant Selina.”

Agnes blushed. The direction of lord Berriton’s gaze placed, beyond the power of dispute, the existing image of his glowing fancy. “ Miss Asgill is the most amiable of women,” said Agnes. “ Oh ! my dear sir,” and she laid her hand on the arm

of the doctor, "what disinterested, what liberal friendship, she shewed your poor Agnes, when she really thought her neglected, and knew not that one being in the world was interested in her fate !"

"Did she?" said lord Berriton. "Noble girl! how unlike the generality of her sex, who seldom accord pure friendship to any but the ugly and illiterate!"

"I trust not, my lord," said Mrs. Adams; "many instances of exalted and generous friendship have fallen under my inspection."

"In females of equal ages?" asked lord Berriton.

"Why, I do not exactly recollect," said Mrs. Adams, with a smile.

"You are unwilling to do so, madam," said lord Berriton; "though I perceive you do not reject my assertion."

"I am afraid to reflect on it," said Mrs. Adams; "nor dare I pause on the conviction that one young and amiable female is a certain exception to your sentiments, lest

I grow angry that the child of my hopes has, during her absence from our roof, allowed strangers to take our place."

Agnes, with a fervent pressure of the hand of Mrs. Adams, begged to repeat, that it was a friendship on her part unsought, but which, she trusted, would be a source of future happiness to both of them. "You know," continued Agnes, with a cheerful air, "I have yet to tell my little adventures."

"I feel I am an intruder," said lord Ber-riton; "but my zeal in a cause that must make either the happiness or misery of my life, must plead an extenuation of my sudden visit."

"It is fortunate, my lord," said the doctor, "when a zeal of this sort is received with candour, and appreciated as it should be."

Agnes blushed—Mrs. Adams looked at the doctor, as if to reprove the sin of raising false hopes; while the good Adams, who actually liked the young peer's manner, and applauded his liberality, saw no

immediate reasons for discouraging his addresses. Agnes had not yet spoken on the subject; and highly as he regarded Cecil, he believed it impossible he could preserve his honour, and break his engagements with Miss Asgill. Lord Berriton, like a true lover, caught its shadows. The approbation of the doctor seemed an ostensible hold, and he claimed an audience immediately after breakfast.

“Agnes,” said Mrs. Adams, so soon as the gentlemen withdrew, “is lord Berriton a favoured lover?”

“Oh, no! now nor ever, dear madam,” said Agnes. “The doctor will not, I hope, encourage him to prosecute professions to which I am by no means disposed to listen. In fact, I have rejected him.”

“And so will Adams, my love,” said the good matron, “when he learns your sentiments.”

The gentlemen returned after a short conference. “Lord Berriton, my love,” said the worthy Adams, taking the hand of Agnes, “has honoured me by a confidence

that has been submitted to your consideration. I never knew you injudicious in your decisions; but have you not been hasty in replying to his lordship's proposals? A fashionable guardian would have negotiated this matter first with yourself; but I deem a conduct like lord Berriton's at once liberal and dignified; it demands a candid reply, from mature reflection. Shall we continue to have the pleasure of receiving his lordship as our occasional visitor, or do you finally reject the honourable alliance offered to you?"

"My lord," said Agnes, "I am deeply sensible of the liberality of your offer; and, while I own this, allow me to add, that no inducement in this world should lead me to act so inimical to moral rectitude, as to make gratitude the leading feature of a life that should own a more exalted, a more tender sentiment."

"Enough, madam," said lord Berriton, respectfully kissing the hand of Agnes. "I withdraw my pretensions;" and with an air

of mortified, yet sincere love, he departed for the residence of Mrs. Manners.

No regrets, no expostulations were offered by the good Adamses. They saw all the liberality of his lordship's proposals, but they weighed little in comparison with the certain happiness of their beloved child, as they termed her. Such was the specious appearance that love had effected on the volatile character of lord Berriton, that the good doctor could scarcely credit the little sketches that Agnes gave of his town manners.

Agnes related her introduction to Miss Asgill, the amiable interest she had taken in her sickness, while she was yet unknown to her; and, in describing her rejection of our heroine's services at Barnes, she left the doctor and his lady in possession of her reasons for so readily declining the honour of a coronet.

At an early hour they repaired to the Hall.

"How gothic I must look!" said lady

Sophia, as she viewed the dress of Miss Melvin, on entering the saloon.

Mrs. Manners smiled approbation on her young favourite, and drawing the Adamases into conversation, left the young people to a *tête-à-tête*.

“Am I not odious?” said lady Sophia.

“Not quite frightful,” said Agnes, laughing.

“But, really, it has become a serious thing since yesterday,” said her ladyship; “the only person I thought I could dress for in this dull place is gone,” and she sighed; “but this morning we have had the most elegant, the most enchanting town luminary—nothing less than the accomplished Berriton;” Agnes blushed; she could have anticipated her ladyship’s communication; but vanity was not her foible —“and he dines here to-day.”

“Does he?” said Agnes, with a look of regret.

“Yes, certainly, he does. Dear me, Miss Melvin, do you object to his lordship’s adding to our hum-drum party?”

“Not in the least, my lady,” said Agnes; “though I cannot consider a party that classes my respectable friends, the Adamses and Mrs. Manners, deserves such a term.”

“Oh! do not be so sentimental,” said her ladyship; “I am sure you must think Mrs. Manners a quiz, and the Adamses are good sort of people; but, Lord! who cares for good folks now-a-days?”

“I hope there are a few who do,” said Agnes; “and my sentimental nature leads me to venerate such; they are novelties, lady Sophia, and you know novelty always attracts.”

“La, I declare you are monstrously improved,” said her ladyship; “that is quite droll. Well, but, my dear Melvin, just come to my *boudoir*, and teach me to arrange my drapery something like yours; it is monstrous becoming.”

“I have little taste that way,” said Agnes, “but if my assistance can be serviceable, I will readily give it.”

“That’s very good,” said her ladyship; and taking the arm of the humble gover-

ness, she led her to her *boudoir*. "Dear me, I declare there is my writing-box open! Well, don't peep, Melvin; do you know, I have been desperately in love since I saw you." (Agnes smiled.) "Yes, indeed I have, and it has made me so poetical! Are you poetical when you are in love?"

"I never was what is termed in love," said Agnes; "but adversity has sometimes made me a little descriptive."

"Never in love! oh you happy insensible!" said her ladyship; "why, these are all sonnets addressed to my Adonis," and she placed a number of irregularly-written scrawls in the hands of Agnes.

"I will not peep," said Agnes, laughing.

"Yes, you may. Give me your opinion of them; I know you understand grammar better than I do, for I always hated it at school; but it don't matter, you know, with me; a woman of fashion can always get an amanuensis for money."

"You are only laughing at me," said Agnes. "You want to throw me off my

guard, and make my remarks the subject of your criticisms."

"No, upon my honour, I don't mean that; do just correct any faults you see, as, perhaps, I may be forced to ask lord Berriton's opinion of my style."

"To ask lord Berriton to look at effusions like these!" said Agnes, who had actually blushed at the tenderness of their language.

"Yes. Why, what is there wrong in that?" said her ladyship. "I am disappointed in my first love; Berriton is devoted to the muses, and nothing could be more propitious to the forming of an attachment than the discovery of similar tastes; 'he might love me for my talent, I him that he did value it.' Is not that a pretty idea?"

"It is not an inappropriate parody," said Agnes; "but, dear lady Sophia, do not, by any means, shew these to lord Berriton. Try the power of your charms, and let him, at a future period, discover your poetical abilities."

"A very good plan," said the subdued idiot; "and, Melvin, only think, these sonnets, if I only alter the name, will do for him."

"I think not," said Agnes, repressing a smile; "a poet owns verse at will; and his lordship would not be flattered by the revision of feelings that he might be vain enough to wish he only had awakened."

"Very true, very true," said her ladyship; "really you are very clever; but Berriton does not sound half so well in verse as Cecil. Oh, Francis! beloved of my soul! see where the 'village preacher's modest mansion stands!'"

Agnes, with a look as correct as that of the love-sick lady Sophia, rested her eye on the white chimnies of the parsonage, which were made visible by the thick foliage of green that contrasted its simple architecture. A half-suppressed sigh that escaped the lips of Agnes made her ladyship start. "You know Mr. Cecil, I believe?" said she.

"I have that pleasure," said Agnes.

"Ah! my mamma Manners told me all

about his attending your father, and all that; but he was not a very intimate friend of yours, was he?"

"He was a very consoling one to my parent, who lies near yon sacred spot," said Agnes, pointing at the church.

"Oh, that made you sigh so," said lady Sophia. "I declare you quite frightened me, for I should quite hate any woman that loved him; and the woman he should dare to love, I could be tempted to poison."

"How shocking!" said Agnes. "Your ladyship must fall in love again, if only to soften such unfeminine feelings."

"Aye, I know such good ladies as you, and some others, think this terrible; but you have no souls, no energies. I was educated on the new system. Dear, liberal Mary, it was you who felt all the agonies, all the thousand tendernesses of *la belle passion*!"

Agnes was silent, but her looks evinced no congeniality of sentiment.

"That hideous Miss Asgill," continued the affected sentimentalist, raising her voice,

“it is you who have drawn my love away! Yes, but for you, I had worn him in my heart of hearts; aye, in my heart’s core.”

“I think your ladyship has been misinformed,” said Agnes. “Mr. Cecil’s engagements with Miss Asgill are of a date prior to your ladyship’s knowledge of him; and, believe me, if you knew the worth of Miss Asgill, you would applaud and love his choice.”

“Never! never! impossible!” said lady Sophia; “she is a tame, ridiculous pedant; quite a natural miss, that would not break the commandments for the world.”

“Then who so proper for a parson’s wife,” said Agnes, “as she who practises the truths he preaches?”

“I beseech you do not irritate my nerves by the mention of such a possibility,” said lady Sophia. “No, no, Cecil, if you reject Sophia, beware how you wound my pride by attempting to elect another to your favour!”

Agnes looked aghast. The agitation of

her companion had raised her beyond all self-command. "We are forgetting the purpose for which we retired," said Agnes, timidly, who saw, in the enraged looks of her ladyship, poison and murder in various shapes. She actually trembled for the chosen of her heart, and the friend of her bosom. "The company will arrive before our important arrangement is made."

Lady Sophia, never insensible to her personal appearance, entered with avidity on its performance. "How ugly I look!" said her ladyship, and she proceeded to daub her cheeks with rouge.

"Hold," said Agnes; "recollect your ladyship was to take my opinion and assistance, and I positively forbid this."

"Poh!" said her ladyship, "Berriton is so used to see blooming cheeks, he will not discover it."

"I must differ with you," said Agnes; "nay, I was really admiring the triumph of nature over art, when I first met your ladyship this morning."

“ But Berriton would think I was quite a country miss, if I abjured so fashionable a distinction.”

“ Lord Berriton, with others of his sex,” said Agnes, “ may, from politeness, overlook so glaring an impropriety, yet I must believe that Nature would be hailed, even by men of fashion, as a most interesting stranger.”

“ I cannot think it,” said lady Sophia, still spreading the crimson dye over her face, in the most thoughtless way.

The approach of carriages called her ladyship’s attention to the window. “ Here comes Nimrod and his sister ; hear it, Miss Melvin—a young widow who is not looking for a husband ! and there comes the easy, the elegant Berriton. *Mon Dieu !* he looks quite *penserosa*. Ah ! my sweet sprig of fashion, it is reserved for the lively Sophia to dissipate that horrifying gloom !”

Agnes smiled at the egotism of her companion, whom she almost envied, as possessing such appeasing and reconciling self-assurances.

They descended to the saloon, and were seated, before the carriages had reached the vestibule. Agnes saw, with temporary surprise, that lady Sophia placed herself in a studied attitude at a distance from her.

Mrs. Manners saw the plan, and beckoning Agnes to her side, said, in a low voice, "Poor giddy thing! she will be humbled before long."

Sir John Owen and lady Neville were announced. Mrs. Manners introduced her *protégée* in a most flattering manner. Lady Neville viewed her with approbation, sir John with a bold scrutiny, that somewhat confused her.

"So you don't know me?" said lady Sophia, poutingly.

"Yes, but I do, my little skittish miss," said sir John, shaking her hand violently.

"Unhand me, sir," said lady Sophia, angrily; "how you discompose one's dress!"

"Pardon me," said he, "I did not perceive. Why, you are decked out; do you mean to get off to-day?"

“What a horrid creature you are!” said lady Sophia; “really monstrous.”

“What has he done?” said lady Neville, advancing with a good-humoured smile.

“Why, spoiled my costume, that I had been at such pains to arrange, and my veil was so classical and charming.”

Agnes was overcome by surprise at hearing such terms given to the adornment of a dress, which was composed of a plain muslin robe, and a clear veil of the same materials.

“Let me adjust,” said lady Neville.

“Let me,” said sir John; “I have an excellent style in these things. Aurora knows I dress Miss Minikin and my little pet with perfect costume.”

“Really! can he do these things?” said lady Sophia.

“Yes, he really does,” said lady Neville, “to the admiration of the Brighton fashionables.”

“Where is Miss Minikin now?” asked lady Sophia.

“At home in the stables,” said sir John.

“ Lady Neville, what does he mean ?” said lady Sophia.

“ Why, he is talking of his favourite horses,” said her ladyship, “ hoping to draw your thoughts from the anger his rude congratulation induced.”

“ But how monstrous to talk of costume and classical taste, when naming horses !” said lady Sophia.

“ Why there I can pardon him,” said his sister; “ such obsolete ideas and far-fetched terms are always affected, and are, in many cases, used without the least combining knowledge as to their reference, or correctness of proximity; and as we know it possible to dress a horse agreeable to ancient style, its application is only an innocent satire that you must forgive.”

“ Where can lord Berriton be ?” said lady Sophia, not attending to the remark of lady Neville.

“ He has just turned down the Elm Walk with Dr. Adams,” said Mrs. Manners.

“With Dr. Adams! Does he know him?” said her ladyship.

“Slightly, my lady,” said Mrs. Adams.

Before lady Sophia had recovered her surprise, the doctor and his companion were seen advancing towards the saloon. Lady Sophia started up, and, with a playful agility, ran down the gravel walk to meet them.

“Berriton looks *à la mort*,” said sir John.

“Do but mark him, Aurora; can that be the gallant gay Lothario?”

“His lordship certainly looks grave,” said lady Neville; “but I like the sober cast of thought.”

In a few minutes the gentlemen, with their hoyden companion, entered the saloon. Lord Berriton paid his compliments to Mrs. Manners with peculiar respect, recognised sir John and his sister, and, with an attention of marked tenderness, took a seat next Agnes.

Lady Sophia was petrified. She applied to her glass. It was not more faithful than

her visual view, and a resentment as warm as contemptible swelled her little bosom. She now beckoned sir John Owen to her side, and began quizzing Agnes and her admirer; but sir John was an acknowledged enemy to affectation, and turned her ladyship's satire on herself. Lady Neville, whose good sense led her to admire the demeanour of Agnes, joined lady Sophia, for the purpose of a little innocent mischief.

“Do you like her figure, Owen?” said lady Neville.

“She stands remarkably well,” said sir John; “better than any woman I ever saw, save one.”

“Poh!” said lady Sophia, “how stablish! But pray who is that one?”

“Why, Miss Asgill,” said sir John.

“Oh, the demure miss,” said lady Sophia. “Now, only see how I will make this timid beauty blush.—Miss Melvin, what do you think sir John Owen says of you?”

“I cannot guess,” said Agnes; “nothing very terrible, I trust, because he

smiles; and if it were distressing, you would spare me."

"Oh! he only compares you to a horse, and says you stand well."

"Indeed!" said Agnes, blushing deeply.

"You are a stranger, ma'am, to my brother," said lady Neville, with great sweetness, "or you would believe that the compliment was a very high one, and what he would scarcely say of any female he sees."

Agnes bowed.

"Lady Sophia," said sir John, with an embarrassment he could not shake off, "declared she would call a blush into your cheek, madam. She has effected it, by repeating what was really meant as a compliment. But, in pity to her ladyship's unblushing cheek, do not wager an attempt so improbable as calling its counterpart, where fashion has not left a trace so refined."

"I declare, sir John, you are quite eloquent," said lady Sophia; "if Miss Melvin's blushes have such a Ciceronean effect, do try what her converse can do, and send lord Berriton to me."

“ I fear his lordship is too sensible of his happiness. My willingness to embrace such a pleasure cannot be doubted,” and sir John advanced towards the place occupied by lord Berriton and Agnes.

Lord Berriton was, indeed, most loth to quit his station, yet, called upon so unequivocally, politeness demanded a certain attention, more especially when his lordship recollected that lady Sophia was the ostensible cause of his visit.

“ Pray, my lord, how long have you known this enchantress ?”

“ The day, the hour, the minute, is ascertained in Love’s calendar,” said lord Berriton, smiling.

“ What a confession !” said lady Sophia, while her fingers were twisting her coral necklace with precipitation. “ You are not so mad, my lord, as to avow a serious passion for a woman of no rank, no fortune ?”

“ Does your ladyship imagine that I would offend your ears by the mention of any but a serious passion ?”

“ Why, no, certainly not,” said lady Sophia ; “ but really, my lord, it is so droll,” and she burst into a fit of laughter. “ Only think, lady Neville ! do come here.”

Lady Aurora placed her chair next to the mortified hoyden. “ Well now, lady Sophia, where is the jest ?”

“ Would you believe it, my lady ? Berriton owns he is in love with that young person over there.”

“ I can readily believe it,” said lady Neville ; “ she is a very lovely girl, and so perfectly unaffected and elegant, that the wonder to me would be if any man could look on her with indifference. Observe, Owen is gallant, and he, you know, has not been subject to the melting mood of late.”

“ Oh ! aye, true,” said lady Sophia ; “ I believe he was once in love with that good lady, Miss Asgill. Well, really now, I do not wonder he should admire this miss, she is something like her. Don’t you think so, my lord ?”

“ Think what ?” said lord Berriton, who was too much engrossed by the undisguised

approbation that sir John bestowed on his mistress, to have eyes or ears for any subject.

“ He’s jealous, upon honour !” said lady Sophia. “ Dear me, I am quite frightened ; how horribly grim he looks !”

“ Lady,” said lord Berriton, relapsing into his fashionable jargon, for he had wisdom enough to discern where trifles pleased, “ you never dreamt of love ; had you felt persecution, you had learned mercy.”

“ Very possible, my lord,” said lady Sophia ; “ I am not sentimental, yet I think I have dreamt of love as often as some others. At least your’s must end in a dream, for your dulcinea told me in confidence to-day, she never was in love.”

“ Told you !” said lord Berriton ; “ impossible ! she is too refined to talk on such a subject with indifference ;” and he checked the completion of a sentence so little complimentary.

“ Well, if love is to make me such a Hottentot,” said lady Sophia, evidently piqued at his lordship’s manner, “ I hope I shall never be so unfortunately sensitive.”

"Do not anticipate miracles," said lady Neville.

"Miracles!" said lady Sophia; "explain. Surely your ladyship don't mean to insinuate that I shall never marry?"

"By no means," said lady Neville; "your ladyship will marry, because you are young, rich, and not ugly; but it is not so certain that you will become a Hottentot in love."

"Who said lady Sophia Western would not marry?" said doctor Adams, who had imperfectly caught the passing conversation.

"No one would venture such a solecism," said lord Berriton; "we were only talking on the probability of her ladyship being desperately in love."

"Why, I believe," said the doctor, "there are such events now-a-days as marrying without love; yet it is but an unstable foundation for domestic bliss."

"If lady Sophia is in despair," said sir John, "I will give her a lift. What say

you, little puss? shall I put you up at Tattersall's, or will you wait till the Newmarket season?"

"What a horrid creature you are!" said lady Sophia. "No, sir, you know I have never been presented yet. I have not come out. Nobody knows exactly my fortune; or whether I am a dasher or a sentimentalist. I shall have my day, sir, no doubt."

"No doubt," said sir John, "every dog has——"

"My dear Owen," interrupted lady Neville, "how can you step aside from your natural sense of propriety, merely to tease my little friend here?"

"Because he is a brute," said lady Sophia, "and he is quite happy when he makes me miserable."

"Lady Sophia," said Mrs. Manners, "do not use so strong an expression to the pleasantries of your friend. Do you not perceive, my dear, that you make the conduct you deplore?"

"Lady Sophia will be so good as to play

me her last new song," said doctor Adams; "she knows how I admire it, and will oblige me."

Lord Berriton led her to the harp, and her ladyship collected her best spirits to captivate her little audience. After performing with considerable execution, she returned to her seat, with conscious superiority in her look.

"Might I ask you, my love," said Mrs. Manners, addressing Agnes, "for any one of my old favourites?"

Agnes would have declined, but lord Berriton started from his seat, and led the half-consenting Agnes to the instrument. "You have seated me, my lord," said she, "but I am really at a loss."

His lordship turned over the leaves of a folio volume. "Hope told a flattering tale," caught his eye. Agnes heeded not the allusion, or accompanying sigh, but sang it in her usual plaintive style.

"Bravo!" said sir John; "charming! You have an exquisite taste, something in

the style of dear Selina," continued he, speaking in a low voice to his sister.

"Music has charms," said lady Sophia, with a shrug of astonishment.

"Do you know the Millington family?" said sir John.

Agnes replied in the affirmative.

"Then you have heard Miss Asgill sing. Has she not a seraphic voice?"

"It is, indeed, a most charming one," said Agnes. "Her execution is of the most fascinating sort; she does not astonish, but she catches the attention, and soothes you into admiration."

"It is a peculiarly fine voice," said lady Neville; "but in familiar conversation I have always listened to her with delight. The very impressive inflections of her tones have an irresistible effect in my idea."

Lord Berriton, doctor Adams, and his lady, united in the praises of our heroine. Mrs. Manners hoped she should have the pleasure of knowing Miss Asgill, which hope called a genuine blush into the cheek of Agnes, who beheld Selina the inmate of

the parsonage, as a necessary introduction to her friend.

“ Oh ! you will see this nonpareil in time,” said lady Sophia. “ But pray, my lord, how long are you going to stop in Berkshire ? ”

“ I leave this,” said lord Berriton, with a sigh, “ to-morrow morning. Lady Fitz-owen’s masquerade will be in a day or two, and I have promised to join the group.”

“ Happy creature ! ” said lady Sophia, “ how I envy you ! What character do you assume ? ”

“ I am undetermined,” said lord Berriton. “ A domino, it is probable, will screen my person, and leave me more at liberty than a character. You had a ticket, Miss Melvin.”

“ I had, my lord, but I declined the obliging offer, having neither talent nor spirit for a character.”

“ I am incredulous,” said sir John.

“ And I positive,” said lord Berriton, “ that Miss Melvin’s attempts are always perfection, for she never acts but on principle.”

Agnes bowed with a smile of humility,

while lord Berriton felt that his compliment, though sincere, yet, as including his lately offered heart, shewed an acquiescence to her decision, that his hourly-increasing passion but ill accorded with.

“ Miss Melvin would make a good nun,” said lady Sophia.

“ Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure ;”

or a priestess ; or, la ! how droll it would be, if you had gone as a schoolmistress ! you know that would have been so natural to you.”

A blush of feeling, not false pride, tinged the cheek of Agnes. There was certainly no shame in having been a tutoress, but the remark was designed to wound, and it lost not its poignancy with one so awake to the friendless situation in which she stood.

“ And suppose, my love, you had taken so arduous a character as that of a governess,” said Mrs. Manners, “ how would you have treated the rude hoyden, [who should insult you under the mask of affected childishness ?”

“ Such a character could never be will-

ingly assumed by me, madam," said Agnes. "When called upon to appear in such a situation, I always treated spoiled children with lenity."

"It was well judged," said Mrs. Manners; "for they are generally incorrigible."

"And take advice as young horses do saddles," said sir John, "kickishly."

"If your ladyship had attended lady Robert's masquerade," said lady Neville, "pray what would have been your character?"

"I declare I don't know, but something odd, quite out of the way. I like oddities; I should like to have been an Iphigene, if lord Berriton had been my Cymon; or a Spanish princess, if I could have persuaded him to be my interpreter."

"Or a lady Constant," said sir John, "if my lord had been your sir Bashful. But quite out of your leading-strings, lady Sophia, and going almost alone, pray what would you have assumed individually?"

"Why a virgin of the sun, or a quaker, or a fortune-teller."

“What an heterogeneous assemblage of ideas!” said sir John.

“I said so to vex you,” said lady Sophia.
“La! I wish dinner was ready, I am so hungry!”

“Shall I order a bit of bread and butter for Miss Hoyden?” said sir John, laughing.

“Beware, sir John,” said doctor Adams;
“I would not venture a large bet that lady Sophia and you are not formed to constitute each other’s happiness.”

“Misery,” said sir John.

“Horrible!” said lady Sophia. “Naughty guardy, I was just beginning to love you very much, you nasty doctor. Oh what a nauseous idea!”

“It has an extensive effect,” said lady Neville; “I declare I quite shudder.”

“Well, ladies, I am neither dismayed by your surprise, nor its effect,” said the doctor; “contrasts are known to assimilate, and I declare I think this by no means improbable.”

Lady Sophia pretended great anger. She

pouted, looked at sir John through her fingers, and practised every grimace of which hoydenism admitted, while sir John laughed heartily at the doctor's conceit, and began a whimsical description of the qualities he should expect in a wife.

The dinner of Mrs. Manners was served with her usual regard to elegance, without ostentation. Lord Berriton was so absolutely under the impression of real and disinterested affection, that the effervescence of his disposition was wholly subdued. His mind had an object ; virtue had awakened his dormant good qualities ; he was an object of respect and regard with the friends of Agnes. They saw her coolness and rejection of his suit with regret, yet resolved on not urging an opinion in a decision so important.

The day passed over without event. Lord Berriton accompanied Agnes to the doctor's, received his final dismissal, and repaired to his inn, purposing to quit Berkshire on the next morning. — The following morning was spent by Agnes in adjusting

her apartment. A fashionable woman would have termed this elegant little room a *boudoir*, but Agnes was content to consider it as a most delectable resource, and affectionate distinction from her worthy friends.

“ I like this arrangement, Agnes,” said Mrs. Adams; “ you will not go to the Hall yet, my love ? ”

“ My first week, dear madam, is yours,” said Agnes. “ I have apprized Mrs. Manners of my intentions, and she is content—nay, approves my plan. Oh ! how delightful is this quiet ! ”

Agnes took her netting, and was amusing Mrs. Adams with her town life, and sometimes beguiling her of tears, when she described her sickness at Barnes, and her wounded feelings at the insolence of Swivel, when lady Sophia, on horseback, arrived at the doctor’s. Neither Mrs. Adams nor Agnes were pleased at the interruption.

“ Some frivolous whim,” said Mrs. Adams, “ has brought her ladyship here.”

Lady Sophia entered the room. “ La ! how neat !—why it is quite pretty ! Dear

me, Miss Melvin, what a favourite you must be with the doctor, that he could spare his books, stands, and maps! Why he never will lend me a book."

"Then I find I am more favoured than I imagined," said Agnes.

"What has brought your ladyship out so early?" said Mrs. Adams.

"Why, to ask Miss Melvin a question," said lady Sophia. "Mrs. Manners tells me, but I won't believe her, that lord Berriton has offered you his hand, and you have refused it; *is it true?*"

The impertinence of the question, and the sarcastic tone of her ladyship's voice, called an honest confusion into the countenance of Agnes. "Though your ladyship has the courage to ask so unprecedented a question," said she, "I do not feel myself obliged to reply," and she pursued her netting.

"Dear me, how odd!—why I should not mind telling, if I were to discard a thousand lovers. I should think it quite

amusing. I am sure I will tell you any thing you choose to ask."

"I cannot possibly take such a liberty," said Agnes.

"Dear me, how formal you are! you want energy. But, perhaps, you never make a confident of a woman. To be sure, it is more safe to trust to a male friend."

"I have no confident," said Agnes; "I have no secrets to repose; but if I had, I should certainly hope to find one of my own sex worthy such trust."

"I have told all my sorrows," said lady Sophia, "to a man—yes, to the doctor I have told all, and he pities me; and that makes me call him guardy; yet I never take his advice, it is so sober."

"Very well, if your ladyship asks my good Mentor's advice, and yet never take it."

"It is only for the effect," said lady Sophia; "I think it looks so interesting to see a young woman like me humble and diffident."

“Certainly, when it is not *affected*,” said Mrs. Adams, “it is a most engaging contemplation; but I have not sufficient worldly knowledge immediately to conceive the utility of deception.”

“It is only a little fashionable notoriety,” said Agnes, smiling. “Lady Sophia is an adept in the manners of the times, I perceive. A mere good sort of person is a nonentity now,” and she smiled. Lady Sophia felt the allusion. “It is quite fashionable to be capricious for something, no matter whether it be the bold philosophy of a ———, or the unblushing ease of a Recamier; so as it attains its object, in being the wonder of the day, it suffices; and the child of nature is a not unfrequent assumption, though effected by most arduous and *unnatural* sacrifices to truth and genuine simplicity.”

“Really,” said lady Sophia, eyeing Agnes through a glass, “you are monstrous severe. Pray have you set up for a contented old maid? I do believe that is your

designation, perhaps on the model of lady Mary Millington."

"What a compliment!" said Agnes; "lady Mary is a perfect woman."

"The most enlightened and amiable of her sex!" said Mrs. Adams.

"Who is this enlightened being?" said lord Glastonbury, as he entered the room accompanied by doctor Adams.

Agnes rose to meet the amiable Glastonbury.

"What happy fellow was the subject of your conversation?" said his lordship, as he detained the hand of Agnes.

"It was a woman, my lord, and a friend of your's," said Agnes, "lady Mary Millington."

"She is an angel!" said lord Glastonbury, "and I, as an angelic messenger, must deliver her ladyship's summons to you."

Agnes received a letter from lord Glastonbury, who, desiring her to use dispatch, turned to pay his compliments to lady Sophia and Mrs. Adams.

Agnes retired to peruse her letter. The contents flattered her, as an assurance of esteem from one she so highly valued; yet she felt reluctance at complying with its contents, and she returned to the company. "My lord," said she, "how could I, without apparent ingratitude to the kindest of friends, quit a home that has been made so studiously acceptable to me?"

"Ask the doctor," said lord Glastonbury.

Agnes referred to doctor Adams.

"I think it quite advisable, my dear," said Adams, with a smile of more than usual meaning.

"And I," said Mrs. Adams, who had gathered the real state of things from a few words which her husband had whispered to her in the absence of Agnes, "am really anxious you should go."

"But Mrs. Manners," said Agnes.

"Oh! lady Sophia will bear your apologies till I can go over to the Hall."

"Will your ladyship," said lord Glastonbury, "assure Mrs. Manners that she never gave stronger proof of discernment than

when she selected this excellent girl for her *élève*, but that, like every thing that is distinguished by a superior mind, the multitude are emulous to share it? Among the many, class me; and tell her, that the masquerade of lady Fitzowen would languish, if Miss Melvin lent not her very efficient aid."

"In pity, my lord," said Agnes, "spare me!"

"You are monstrous fortunate," said lady Sophia, with evident chagrin.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Adams, "your little wardrobe must be selected; lord Glastonbury leaves this in an hour."

Lady Sophia took leave with a mortified air; and, in less than the time named by her friend, Agnes, in a chaise and four, was pursuing her quondam lover on the road to London.

CHAP. IV.

“ Is Heaven unkind to man, and man alone ?

Shall he alone, whom rational we call,

Be pleas'd with nothing, if not blest with all ?

The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find,)

Is not to act or think beyond mankind ;

No powers of body or of soul to share,

But what his nature or his strength can bear.”

To those who have felt the pang that poverty inflicts, who have groaned beneath the local grief that delicacy would hide, whose throbbing temples spurned the soothing pillow, whose trembling nerves shrunk from the coming morn, will the tender-nesses and anxieties of love appear the phantasies of folly—its griefs imaginary ? Ah, no ! for who feels sorrow in all its sad varieties, possesses that attenuated quality of mind that yields to sympathy, and expands to soft impressions. That beaten path, the road to happiness, over which so many sanguine travellers rush heedlessly, is the only journey for which human wis-

dom has not devised protection and security. In all the ordinary movements in which contingent circumstances call us to participate, personal comfort and safety is considered—reason is active, and the goal in view. But in the delusive and fleeting phantoms that are, by short-sighted mortals, termed their happiness, their desirable good, reason is seldom called into action—the chimera flies, and the self-devoted victim becomes the dupe of his own invention. But as good is ever deduced from ill, even this has its purpose. How many would sink into the apathy of indolence, if no chimerical view aided their torpid imaginations! That caprice actuated the female whom we are humbly placing before the eye of criticism as a reasonable being, must not be presumed—no, though smarting under the incertitude of a sincere yet modest preference, the incalculable advantages of a moral education were highly salutary, in restoring her to that temper of mind which the world cannot give. London, once the haven of her

youthful wishes, had exhibited many delusions that her candour shrunk from. A life of fashion had, even by its votaries, been in many instances defined a life of deception. She saw women who liked everything but home, who smiled on the most offensive gallantry, yet wearing the name of virtue; men, whose principles were of the deepest turpitude, under the distinction of men of fashion, received, and not unfrequently valued for their vices. Lady Fitzowen hid her virtues under a garb of fashion, and rather than forego that tinsel-splendour, had allowed herself to be ranked amongst the vicious, when her internal claims might have classed her with the most amiable. Mrs. Hanthin deceived, by appearing a good mother—her husband, by affecting indifference where he was tenderly attached. “All this,” said Selina, “is little honourable to the moral and religious character of the times. It is not in retirement, but in the practice of retired virtues, that real happiness is to be found.

Dear Marian, happy friend, whose sunshine of the mind is reflected in the happiness you make !”

Selina was thoughtful. To what favoured spot her fancy roved, we do not pretend to trace, but the association brought the Fireside of doctor Cotton so forcibly to mind, that some of its beautiful lines escaped her lips. A tap at her door, and the immediate entrance of lady Mary, lord Glastonbury, and Mrs. Brooks, surprised and roused our heroine.

“ Come, Selina,” said lord Glastonbury, “ will you unite in a stratagem for the yet love-sick Cecil ?”

“ You look so gay,” said Selina, viewing her visitors, “ that I think I may assent.”

“ I know Berriton’s purpose,” said lord Glastonbury. “ I am assured he will be rejected. Frank has accepted a ticket for lady Fitzowen’s masquerade. Only two days are wanting to this important one. Shall I run down into Berkshire, and bring Miss Melvin to you ? Lady Mary will write her an invitation to join you, and be of

the masquerade party, which was originally intended. Keep her in ignorance of the purposed meeting ; let Frank and her be surprised into an interview at the assembly of lady Robert, where I trust their mutual happiness will be effected."

" I assent," said Selina ; " but will Miss Melvin like this mode of surprising her ? Is it fair, quite honourable ?"

" Remember, my little girl," said lord Glastonbury, " how old Moreton surprised Marian into love and happiness."

" Not into love, I deny, my lord," said Marian ; " except it was that new feeling of filial regard that your liberality induced."

" Then you will own I am not an erroneous judge of young girls' hearts, if I could steal a small proportion of love from one that was devoted to Henry ?"

" I think you an incomparable judge," said Marian, " and hail the scheme as a happy one."

" And I," said lady Mary, " beside the

pleasure of receiving Miss Melvin, have many reasons to wish this plan effected."

"And then, Selina, I want your aid," said lord Glastonbury; "for I am determined on making that villainous misanthrope, Montgomery, in love with life, and a very charming girl, that I know."

"Indeed, my lord," said Selina, while her perturbation and colour contradicted her words, "I cannot possibly have any interest in sir Edward's arrangements; and a misanthrope is, of all others, the most arduous to convert. Indeed, my lord, you must excuse me."

"Indeed I will not," said lord Glastonbury; "for I have wagered him a very fine Madona in my cabinet, that I make him of this world again, in spite of his prejudices."

"The prejudices of a misanthrope are so woven with his nature," said lady Mary, "that I should think your project a chimaera, did I not consider sir Edward's an imaginary disgust, that will be superseded by the interposition of an interested friend."

"And I am that friend," said lord Glas-

tonbury; "yet I never feel efficient in cases of interest, excepting when some bright angel smiles on my plan, and goes hand in hand with my wishes. I will impress you to my service, Selina," taking the hand of our heroine; "promise."

"In any other case, my lord," said Selina, "I would cheerfully join you; but even lady Mary thinks your friend's seclusion takes rise in imaginary motives, and I deem such caprice so much beneath a man of sense, that I would even advise you not to take such an useless trouble."

There was an energy and self-reproof in the manner of Selina as she spoke, that caused lady Mary to observe her minutely. For the first time in her life, the eyes of our heroine met those of her protectress with an expression of diminished affection. Alas! how subtle, how poignant is the pang that real love inflicts! What self-created anguish distends and oppresses its victims! Lady Mary had *more* than surmised her affections to be Montgomery's, and she termed the feelings that had filled

her bosom with modest hope imaginary. Our heroine scarce knew the extent of favour that her heart willingly accorded Montgomery, till lady Mary thus demolished the fabric that her tender imagination had raised. Lady Mary, whose penetration never forsook her, discovered the secret that mothers even own, that the heart, on which the fondest maternal solicitude has been bestowed, that has, with all the loveliness of modest duty, blessed the hand that reared it, is ultimately fostered, reared, and enlightened, to be given to a comparative stranger. Happy the maid, who, in this grand era of her life, selects from the garish multitude the associate mind, whose reason aids her passion by approving her distinction.

“Well, my love,” said lady Mary, who saw all the internal discomforture of her beloved Selina, “shall I address Miss Melvin in your name?”

“Oh, certainly,” said Selina, returning the affectionate pressure of lady Mary’s hand.

Marian remained with our heroine while lady Mary retired to write. Lord Glastonbury proceeded to arrange his journey, in which no time was to be lost. Mrs. Brooks endeavoured, by a lively description of their dresses and intended characters, to dissipate the chagrin of her friend. Selina was passive. No remark, no lively sally, interrupted the observations of Marian, who, with a liberal discernment, beheld the acute influence that Montgomery held on the feelings of her friend. No words, no description, could so forcibly have reconciled her to the loss of Selina as a sister, as this silent proof of her internal anguish.

“ Henry rode to the Priory yesterday,” said Marian, carelessly.

“ Did he ?” said Selina, her eyes asking questions, though her lips were closed.

“ Sir Edward is indefatigable in improving the grounds ; but Henry chid him for the sombre appearance of a cave that he has designed. It is to be called the Cave of Trophonius ; for on the spot in which it is being made, he learned truths that have

sunk deep into his heart, he says. While a beautiful figure of Hope, that, in the effervescence of his nature, he had modelled by an artist of eminence, was being conveyed to a lumber-room (Selina trembled with agitation), Henry stopped the modest vestal. ‘My dear Ned,’ said he, ‘how can you voluntarily deprive yourself of so fair, so soothing a companion?’ ‘By Heavens! Brooks,’ said the ardent Montgomery, ‘I deprecate my folly in ever having dared to own such a feeling! It never was mine. Her purity denied me that, though my impetuous nature languished for her treachery.’

“Thus, you see, dear Marian,” said Selina, “that your faulty friend erred only in heart, not in word.”

“I see, I feel all that, and her guileless, her inestimable innocence,” said Marian, as she tenderly took the trembling hand of our heroine, whose blushing cheeks expressed her sense of the confession her unguarded nature had induced.

“Oh! do not deem me weak, Marian,”

said Selina ; “ I have, indeed, betrayed a participation, where delicacy should have been silent.”

“ How sincerely I rejoice,” said Marian, “ that where you are thus inclined to distinguish, you are beloved, adored ! Nay, Selina, start not ; Henry is all gaiety at the prospect his fancy anticipates, though he has left Montgomery in the purgatory that he thinks the man deserves, who robbed us of a sister we had so long twined round our hearts, as to be inseparable in all our plans of happiness ; and if I should yet have to sigh over the fate of Frank, if Agnes Melvin should not own a mutual affection !”

“ Heaven forbid that I should develop feelings that a delicate mind would treasure !” said Selina ; “ but my reflection on some coincidences make it more than probable that Frank’s happiness will soon be confirmed.”

The amiable negotiator in the cause of love was soon invested with his credentials, and departed.

Selina, left to the reproaches of her own heart, blushed at the recollection of her transient resentment to her cousin. Seeking the retirement of lady Mary, she besought her pardon for a conduct so irreverent.

“ You were never more the object of my tenderest consideration,” said lady Mary, as she drew her beloved charge to her bosom, “ no, not even in infancy, Selina, than at this moment. For all the ills of childhood, my experience and counsel were ever found efficient; but now the first might lead you to take a too gloomy view of life, and perhaps make you more than an imaginary recluse (smiling), and the latter is an applicative that is never offered in your disease, at least by skilful physicians.”

Selina smiled through the tears that her real *contrition* had caused.

“ But now, my love,” continued lady Mary, “ leaving your disease to the issue of, I trust, auspicious fate, I must lead you to participate in a pleasurable feeling that is mine. The pleasure of receiving Miss

Melvin under our roof, is, apart from her own worth, a most happy coincidence. You, my love, just entering into what is called life, have made your *debut* in a most unfavourable way. No sooner were you introduced into society, than the usual questions, 'Who is she?'—'What fortune has she?' &c. &c. were asked. However these were replied to, the closing remark, 'She is engaged,' was never omitted—by the men, to prove that had that not been the case, they would have been candidates—by your own sex, to deter so useless a devotion, which they perhaps did not lament. Whether you have not been spared much ridiculous profession, or whether by an engagement so apparently immutable, you have lost the opportunity for happiness, remains to be determined. Two or three men, of unimpeachable honour, have, with manly confidence, sought the ear of my father, and received his candid explanation, which, though founded on your own judgment, he never believed to be permanent. Thus you see, my Selina, there are many

disadvantages attending a contract formed so early in life: there is no cause for triumph to a woman of delicacy in the *number* of her admirers; but it is an arrogance admissible, that a woman may select from the many one worthy her affection: but I am deputed to tell you," said lady Mary, "that your uncle, who has been silent, while he believed you bound by voluntary engagements, has long had a match in contemplation for you, that would make his close of life perfect in happiness."

"Good Heavens!" said Selina, "how can I dare to refuse, where I am bound to obey! Spare me, my dear cousin; tell him I will promise to dedicate my life to his service, but that I cannot command my feelings. Yes, voluntarily, I declare——"

"That you will await the ordeal which affection imposes," said lady Mary, interrupting the zealous Selina, "nor make hasty decisions, where reflection will more assuredly facilitate your happiness. That policy which delicacy induces, makes me rejoice, that, under our roof, and with the

concurrence of the whole family, Cecil will be introduced to his mistress; it will at once do away all misrepresentation that might otherwise give colour to the fate of Miss Melvin. Anxious as I am for the establishment of so amiable a girl, I am yet tenaciously alive to the most transient misapplication of circumstance or person.”

Selina felt all the tenderness of lady Mary's affection; she saw all its propriety. The disadvantages of her own situation appeared obvious; the man whom she now owned as the lord of her affections might never claim her love; he might consider the very rejection that her principles had led her to the adoption of with Cecil, as a proof of flippancy, instability; “and ah!” thought Selina, “if this idol of my heart should discern why I appear the indecisive and romantic being I am, would he not despise me? Yes, Montgomery, your's is an ardent, yet a delicate mind; you would hate the light, the thoughtless Selina!”

At that moment the words of Marian

glanced over her mind. Again, love, which ever delights to tantalize its victims, drew a line of subtle correctness between the hopes that active friendship might repose on, and the more delicate and less tenable ones that an enthusiastic and tender passion could admit as feasible. While these feelings took lead in the mind of our heroine, she felt her portion of human misery. It is true, her lot might have been more poignant, her fate woven in a less supportable chain; yet these were her miseries; and her susceptibility of nature, without yielding to unbecoming softness, owned all the anxieties that refined and delicate love could suggest.

While Montgomery, a stranger to the feelings of his adored Selina, passed his time at the Priory, at one moment representing the idea of embellishing its simple beauties, the next pursuing, with all the ardour that fancy, aided by scientific taste, could devise, even the most minute addition, he was not unmindful of the amiable lady Lomond, who, yet unclaimed by her

proud father-in-law, remained the guest of lady Asgill. The daily papers seemed to anticipate some exploit from lord George; to prevent any sudden annunciation of either joy or sorrow to a wife so attached and wounded as the humbled lady Lomond now was, had become a serious interest to the generous Montgomery, who, with the affection of a brother, devised every amiable method of deceiving her, by riding daily to lady Asgill's, and communicating such particulars as friendship deemed advisable.

Lady Asgill had extorted a promise from her young friend, that she would not herself seek information, a promise that her matronly office made plausibly cautious. The frequent visits and contiguous habitation of sir Edward, had induced the venerable lady Asgill to forego her wish of receiving her granddaughter as the companion of lady George. She was as yet a stranger to the dissolution of Miss Asgill's engagements with Cecil. Lady Mary and sir Eldred, though they felt the propriety

of her sharing in every circumstance that related to our heroine, withheld, from motives of well-judged caution, this, to them, fortuitous proximation of their wishes. Lady Asgill, though advanced in life, and possessed of virtues that made her highly estimable, retained an ardency of disposition, that had more than once tinctured her fate with difficulties. Though her delicacy was unimpeachable, it was probable that the certainty of her darling Selina's being at liberty to bestow her hand where her ladyship had long contemplated with delight every manly and amiable quality, would have been a conviction so suited to her feelings, as to have hastened a disclosure, where the protectors of our heroine wisely judged a probation, of even a short duration, might be effectually advantageous.

Our Selina, accompanied by lady Mary and sir Eldred, on the morning after lord Glastonbury's departure, proceeded to Richmond. To lady Asgill, the most trivial occurrence, in which her *child* (as she called Selina,) took share, was interesting. The

approaching festivity at lady Fitzowen's was talked over, and her intended character and dress.

Lady Lomond seemed absorbed in melancholy. Selina viewed her pallid cheek with real sympathy. Her smiling babe seemed to have stolen all the brilliancy of her ladyship's charms.

The arrival of Montgomery called the roses to her cheek; while Selina, whose heart throbbed at the sound of his name, strove to conceal the tremor that his entrance had caused.

With an embarrassment unusual to the eloquent harbinger in friendship's cause, he made his compliments. Lady Lomond, whose heart lived on her lips, imputed the agitation of Montgomery to her own immediate concerns. "Tell me! ah, tell me all!" said she, with a look of agonizing supplication.

"My dear friend," said Montgomery, taking her trembling hand, "I am, indeed, most unfortunate. This morning, on my word, I have no news to communicate; a

nervous head-ache has quite deranged me, and the surprise and, I believe, pleasure of seeing my friends, have made an idiot of me."

"I will believe you," said lady George, endeavouring to compose herself.

"I am certain he speaks truth," said lady Asgill, "for I never saw him so ridiculous in my life; and if the *belief* only of the pleasure he is in possession of makes him so *degagée* and charming, what would the conviction that he *deserved* to be so cause? Really, sir Edward, I must beg you to take another seat, and not, by your elegant abstraction, and very polite interposition, deprive me of the sight of my granddaughter."

Montgomery had actually seated himself between her ladyship and our heroine. His back was to lady Asgill, and his eyes fixed, with a penetrating yet reproachful look, on the face of Selina, whose heightened colour, and more than ordinarily attractive figure, seemed the effect of internal happiness in his jaundiced imagination. "A

thousand pardons, my dear madam," said he, starting from his reverie, "I deserve your reproof; but consider, my dear lady Asgill, how long I have been deprived of this happiness."

"If that silly love-sick Lucy had but my spirit," said lady Asgill, "she would banter you properly, as if *you* were not daily in the habit of seeing handsome women."

"Ah! but, my dear lady Asgill, that permission, and——"

"Very fine, truly," said her ladyship; "so, because it is in your power, you do not prize the enviable distinction; you are growing quite a Penruddock; and I much doubt, if this constellation, that has just made you so eminently well bred, would be valued, if you could view it every day."

"By Heavens!" said Montgomery, rising from his seat, when, catching the mild eye of lady Mary, he repressed the exuberance of his bursting heart, and hastily quitted the room.

"Retirement has done little for my

ward," said sir Eldred, who saw, with regret, the vehemence of his disposition.

Lady Mary, who trembled for the happiness of her Selina, changed the conversation, while sir Eldred followed the impetuous lover to the garden.

"Sir Eldred is not displeased with Montgomery," said lady Lomond, with sweetness. "Indeed, lady Mary, you must hear of all his kindness, his worth, his delicate friendship towards me, an unhappy outcast. He is the most amiable and generous of men! Ah! let some allowance be made for a man situated like Montgomery," and she glanced at our heroine, whose grateful feelings were warmly interested in her ladyship's eulogium. "Montgomery has a heart of inestimable worth! His faults are those of an enthusiast; his feelings are intense, and his independant rank in life has left him too much in his own power. Believe me, there is not a gentler or more tractable being in existence. I declare to you, lady Mary, that his happiness is a wish so near

my heart, that I cannot view him but with the most lively interest."

"He has certainly made you his confidant, Lucy," said lady Asgill. "*I* never heard that any particular griefs attached to this young man's fate, whom I esteem too highly to wound by irreverent gaiety."

"I am so much in his confidence," said lady George, "that I can fully exculpate him from caprice or guile. I wish I could as easily admit the hope, that his fate would prove an happy one."

Selina was the sport of every accent of her ladyship's, and again the sweet semblance of hope rested on her heart.

"It is a serious evil to a young man," said lady Mary, "when his youth is passed, in the society of doating age, or in the circle of his own age. On an unamiable disposition it usually stamps the arrogance that Fortune thinks her privilege; while on the ardent fancy of an enthusiast, it has the effect of making irascible what would, in the intercourse of a self-judging world, have been subdued and softened into that

yielding and enviable equanimity which social life demands."

"I am continually regretting," said lady Asgill, "that Millington had not the caution to have this boy under his eye."

"Circumstances precluded that," said lady Mary; "but I will, with lady Lomond, believe that he is not only amiable, but will be in time freed from this enemy to his peace, this impetuous and over anxious temper." Selina felt humbled in this disposal of her bosom's treasure; her eye sunk beneath the glance of lady Mary, who, with an emphatic tone of voice, added—"You and I, my dear lady Asgill, however our feelings may lead us to spare the possessor of such a disposition, must ever reflect with anguish on the griefs that grew out of those very foibles of temper."

"Enough, enough, my well-judging, my beloved Mary," said lady Asgill, while tears struggled down her venerable cheek.

Selina rose; she pressed the yielding form of her amiable parent to her bosom, and while the sympathizing drops fell on the

passive hand she retained, "Oh spare me such a sight," said she, "my dear, my beloved parent! These tears, this look, I have seen their likeness, when all the ardour and the errors that you lament were lost, when the most interesting and penitent of men knelt to his wondering child, and sought her pardon."

"Mary," said lady Asgill, looking towards lady Mary, "is it possible?"

"It is even so, my dear madam," said her ladyship.

"Thank Heaven!" said lady Asgill, with a firmness that evinced her self-command; "then, my Selina, you saw and blessed your parent! Grievous indeed was that inversion, that made a child's blessing the meed efficient to a father's peace!"

Lady Lomond, who had quitted the room at the commencement of this development, now returned with her babe, declaring "that he was, though young, an enemy to tears, having often fled her arms for those of his nurse, when she was so inclined."

Lady Mary, who felt all the tenderness of a daughter for her venerable friend, readily admitted the innocent pledge of mirth, who soon unconsciously wrought the harmony desired.

Sir Eldred and Montgomery, who returned evidently on good terms, took part in the conversation. "Mary," said the former, "does your system of retirement extend to the day-light enjoyment of a three o'clock breakfast, or, fashionably speaking, a *dejeune*?"

"That does not depend on the amusement, but the invitor," said her ladyship.

"This unfortunate young man," continued sir Eldred, "has been actually teased into an exertion of the sort, and he is most anxious for your presence."

"I will not refuse my presence to a misanthrope's meal," said her ladyship; "as a self-devoted recluse, I may, perhaps, have a claim on sir Edward's gallantry; but I more willingly acquiesce, because I trust my visit to the Priory will lead to a prospect

of society, that shall derange the misanthrope's system."

Sir Edward looked inquiry, while the conscious Selina owned the possession of nerves that throbbed intensely.

"Do you join the masqueraders to-morrow evening?" asked lady George of Montgomery.

"I had resolved not to do so," said sir Edward, "but a pressing note from Brooks this morning has almost tempted me to forego my intention."

"Oh! go by all means," said lady Lomond. "It is, I believe, the last her ladyship intends giving; it would amuse you."

"My ward seems to have fallen in the way of being spoiled," said sir Eldred, smiling at the interest her ladyship took in Montgomery's pleasures.

"It has been my happiness," said sir Edward, "to find near my home all the charm that society ever owned with me—domestic comfort. I am admitted to the participation of a little circle, who honour me by

their friendship, and bear with my present indisposition, to entertain which is, with deference to lady Mary's assertion, beyond an imaginary ability."

"I do not in the least oppose your report of yourself," said lady Mary. "I will readily admit that the mind which is capable of exertion may, by solitude and useless indulgence, become inert and languid even to listlessness; but I would blame even a lady Asgill, who encouraged such a metamorphose in one, I trust, born to ornament his station."

"Suspend your opinion of this culprit," said lady Lomond, with a smile of lurking archness; "I intend to partake of the *dejeune* at the Priory, as it is not to be till my George is safe; when you will trust to my power of convincing you, that the smiling environs of the Priory speak the feelings of an active rather than a torpid mind."

Sir Edward gaily placed the child in the arms of lady George, and bidding the little fellow kiss his mamma, declared he could not stand such flattery. Lady Mary now

proposing to depart, Montgomery led her ladyship to the carriage.

Lady Asgill pressed Selina to her heart. "That interview, my love, every word, every look, must be given to me at some early period. Poor Mary must be spared. She 'lives o'er all her griefs anew,' in such reminiscence; but I feel renovated in the most trifling particular that marked my Edward's penitence."

Selina promised acquiescence, and with a tearful eye followed sir Eldred to the carriage.

Montgomery received her hand to seat her. Her tremor was visible, and with all the unguarded warmth that accompanied every action of this young man, he detained her, and with a look of anxious inquiry, exclaimed—"She is ill! Lady Mary, return to the house; I will dispatch a messenger."

"Indeed I am not ill," said Selina, confused and abashed by his ardent manner; "I shall be better presently," and she darted into the carriage.

Montgomery, mortified, drew back, and, with a haughty bow, begged pardon.

Sir Eldred smiled at the mutual entanglement of two so dear to him, while lady Mary, kissing her hand, reminded him she should expect a card for the *dejeune*. Again sir Edward bowed, and the carriage drove off.

Selina, though flattered by the interest Montgomery took in her feelings, was yet a stranger to repose. "All this, while it soothes my love," sighed she internally, "is but little in union with my delicacy; for he knows not that I am disengaged."

With all the hurry and incertitude that attends the estate of either sex, while yet the mutual declaration is unuttered, we will leave Miss Asgill in Grosvenor-square, looking anxiously to the arrival of Miss Melvin, whose happiness, though contemplated abstractedly, was highly interesting to her; yet, that a latent idea that her *own* would not be accelerated by the completion of Agnes's, is a truth, of which even the liberal-minded Selina could not divest her-

self; lady Mary's suggestion of sir Eldred's views for her happiness appearing less formidable, as she allowed herself to reflect on the uniform tenderness of her noble and generous protectors.

Lord Berriton, in his journey to London, had his reflections. It was an exercise of feeling, in which he seldom indulged, and like all newly-digested or lately-adopted principles, he had made small advances to perfect them. The refusal of his hand and fortune by a portionless girl, proved, on his reflection, a humiliating feeling; and though he felt all the love that his disposition was capable of for Miss Melvin, and would, had he been favoured, have honourably concluded the first honourable passion in which he had ever been engaged, yet his disappointment was mortifying, and in the wisdom of his cogitations, he made two resolves—the first, that he would fight Montgomery, whom he believed to be the primary cause of his rejection, as Agnes had avowed her knowledge of his illicit intentions towards her, and

Montgomery had previously done the same; the second, that he would send a *carte blanche* to the divine *****, whom he determined on making more conspicuous than ever, by lavishing a few thousands in equipages and dress for her; thus retrieving his lately languishing notoriety, which he was now endeavouring to reason himself into the certainty of being the *ultimatum* of excellence in a man of fashion.

What a satire on the best feelings of virtue, to imagine that the splendour of a Circe could raise the envy of a delicate mind! What a lamentable truth to believe, that we live in times when the ear of delicacy is offended by the invidious comparisons that men of *fashion* draw between the known courtesan and the woman of honour; when the divine voice, majestic grace, and harmonious strains of a slave of the public, is held up as the model for virtuous imitation! "Shame on the world!" on the men who adulate, on the women who allow such outrageous and levelling libertinism! To the fallen sister, to the

penitent Magdalen, may the eye of Pity and the hand of Mercy ever be extended; but to the avowed and exalted profligate, let Virtue look her superiority, and, by discountenancing her vices, preserve her immaculate and deathless name!

Late in the evening of the day we have passed with our readers, lord Glastonbury and Miss Melvin arrived. The unaffected pleasure that marked her reception gave an ease to her manner, that, on her journey, she had believed it impossible she could acquire. Though imperfectly acquainted with the purport of her expedition, she had learned enough to make her alive to a variety of sensations. By a strange fatality, this was her first introduction to sir Eldred and his daughter. The mild benignity of sir Eldred needed only to be seen to be valued, while lady Mary's pleasing manners engaged confidence and commanded respect.

Lord Glastonbury took leave, declaring he was very much inclined to believe that the approaching masquerade would boast

more true touches of nature than any he could name. "I only wish for the power," said he, "of drawing half a dozen masks aside, at the time I should adjudge."

"You would sooner spare than wound at any time," said lady Mary; "and your stratagems are always so effective, that I trust to the efficacy of this."

"Are you included in this arrangement?" said Agnes, addressing Selina; "for lord Glastonbury wishes to persuade me that I am important in a development about to be unravelled. I cannot exactly ascertain its nature," said Agnes, "yet I submit to it, under the full confidence that *my* feelings have a share in the good judgment of such distinguished friends; but to find that another of my own age was united in the *denouement*, would be a pleasing anticipation to my, perhaps, too fearful disposition."

"I applaud your timidity in a case of this sort," said lady Mary; "but my dear Miss Melvin may rest assured, that she is with those who, while they feel the live-

liest interest in her fate, will never lose sight of that delicacy and refined sense of honour that constitutes a prominent feature in her character, and justifies their unqualified admiration of her."

Agnes replied with all the eloquence that her grateful heart would admit, and retired to repose, with the firmest reliance that no step derogatory to her feelings would be taken, and with the most perfect sense of that liberality which marked the conduct of her hospitable entertainers.

CHAP. V.

"In peace Love tunes the shepherd's reed ;
In war he mounts the warrior's steed ;
In halls, in gay attire, is seen ;
In hamlets dances on the green.
Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
And men below, and saints above ;
For Love is Heaven, and Heaven is Love."

SIR Eldred, who had much delight in the society of the young and amiable, saw in

the unaffected Agnes all that could claim his friendship.

The breakfast-table in Grosvenor-square, next morning, owned an additional charm in the acquisition of Miss Melvin.

“ I have so long been accustomed to a despotic sway in this little family,” said lady Mary, smiling, “ that I was actually going to make you a vassal of mine, Miss Melvin, without ceremony.”

“ I entreat your ladyship to believe,” said Agnes, “ that it is a despotism under which I shall feel more enviable liberty than I have for a long while experienced. Accept me, I beseech you, as the humblest of vassals.”

“ How do you reconcile vassalage and liberty, Miss Melvin ?” said sir Eldred.

“ By a code that my fears have perhaps made more than necessarily formidable,” said Agnes. “ While under the eye of a parent, sir Eldred, I was most happy ; his was a reign of mild superiority, beneath which my most secret thoughts expanded, ever meeting in his benignity the tender-

est judgment; left to myself, the world has imposed a chilling barrier between my feelings and my conduct, a sort of bulwark that a dependant must shield herself by, not only to secure her from the shafts of the pitiless, but to guard her from the approaches of the vicious; as such, I have been for some time a slave."

"Excellent, admirable girl!" said sir Eldred, putting the hand of Agnes into that of his daughter. "Mary, you must make this girl your vassal, as you have termed it; allowing me to add, that in all the future feelings of a mind so well moulded and taught, I shall feel a zealous interest, and expect to be consulted, whenever a father's counsel or affection is deemed essential."

"I am too happy," said Agnes, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Selina felt all the sympathy of a sister for her amiable friend, with whom lady Mary retired, as she had intimated.

"I am not gifted with the power of di-

vation," said lady Mary, as she placed Agnes by her side, in her dressing-room, "but, my dear Miss Melvin, there is a fatality which will, I trust, terminate most happily for some young friends of mine, in which, while I am deeply interested, one of the principal elucidations is yet wanting to make my share in it as perfect as I could wish it. You have seen little of my Selina; her character has yet to unfold itself; she is, perhaps, as——"

"She is the most noble, the most exalted of women," said Agnes, interrupting lady Mary. "Ah, madam, she would have protected me when I was a stranger to her. When she found me sick, and in apparent poverty, her liberal heart dictated the most delicate, the most efficient means of comfort for me!"

"Then why did you reject her, my dear?" said lady Mary.

"Why," said Agnes, "because ——" and the crimson hue mounted on her cheek, "because——"

“Remember,” said lady Mary, impressively smiling, “the barrier is broken; you are not the world’s slave now.”

“I declined her generous friendship,” said Agnes, with firmness, “because my heart had not in adversity learned to forget the perfections of one, who, introduced to me in sorrow, became my comfort under affliction, and my solace in the depth of woe. But, lady Mary, though my weakness is known to you, let me extenuate its presumption, by adding, that he for whom my days have been embittered is a stranger to my unpardonable, my unsought affection. No, lady Mary, mine is the weakness, and mine alone the punishment. His engagements were known to me, and yet I yielded him my heart.”

“Enough, my sweet girl; Selina will rejoice with me; she loves you already as a sister.”

“Madam,” said Agnes, “did I not say that Miss Asgill’s intended union with Mr. Cecil was known to me?”

“ Yes, my love,” said lady Mary, “ but those engagements are dissolved.”

“ Dissolved !” said Agnes, while breathless and pale she gazed on the features of lady Mary.

Her ladyship then took a cursory review of the late voluntary disunion. As her auditor listened, she gained a degree of composure, and the colour of her face seemed to bloom in her cheeks, in all the modest animation that virtue might approve. Lady Mary then proceeded to develop a part of lord Glastonbury’s plan. Agnes started at the idea of meeting Cecil in such a way.

“ Cecil is a stranger to the whole,” said lady Mary ; “ and you were to be wholly so, if lord Glastonbury’s instructions had been fully attended to ; but as no obligation bound me to such observance, I felt it more consistent with my ideas to ascertain whether you would have that interest in his lordship’s kinsman that his partiality made him think probable.” The arch smile that played over her ladyship’s countenance

raised a faint one in that of Agnes. "But lord Glastonbury is an excellent judge in cases of this sort," continued her ladyship; "he is not only the most liberal patron of virtue, but the most fortunate in his interpositions. I must, in justice to your sincere friend, Miss Asgill, assure you, that she united in my opinion of the propriety of your being acquainted with the purposed introduction. She is sensitive without affectation, tenderly alive to decorum, yet, I trust, not fastidious: and now I am honoured by your confidence, Miss Melvin, and assured that motives the most propitious to our wishes influenced your rejection of my Selina's friendship, I shall, in return for your candour, observe, that your heart's election destroyed no projected plans, however appearances have contributed to favour such opinion. No, it was by a Providence, ever watchful over her duteous children, that the heart of Agnes Melvin was destined to make the happiness of the amiable Cecil, whose honour and principles deemed the vows of early

youth too binding to be heedlessly broken, or contumaciously resigned. My Selina, whose days of infancy were passed in his society, was, for some years, accustomed to view in him the only polished and elegant being of his sex. Their childish preference gained strength from the retirement of their lives, and the intercourse of our families; when discovered, it counteracted a very favourite and fixed purpose of my father's; but in a case so tenderly important, he forbore to use coercive measures. The worth of his family, and his own intrinsic merits, made opposition inconsistent with our friendship for them, and our affection for our dear child. To persuade them that their affection, as puerile, was mutable, seemed the most erroneous suggestion we could offer. Selina refused the alliance of a neighbour, whose fortune and connexions were what the world calls eligible. This seemed to give them such a superiority over our prudently adduced assertions of theirs being a childish passion, that though we were firm in our

persuasion that time would establish our presentiments, we closed the argument, by allowing that time should decide on their loves. How short a period it required to lead the willing heart of Cecil to view Agnes Melvin as the mistress of his more mature reason, I cannot pretend to decide," said lady Mary; "and with regard to Selina, I can scarcely venture an opinion, lest on one hand I give additional colour to the belief that our sex are frivolous and inconstant, or detract from the superior advantages that the world generally attaches to wealth and beauty, by believing it possible that Miss Asgill was in idea rejected before she owned an estranged heart. Never may virtue want the triumph that the latter implies, and may my child, when again disposed to select, prove the fallacy of the first. That their defection was mutual, is a most soothing reflection. The very ingenuousness that marked their unhesitating confidence in this particular, is a strong proof that theirs was indeed a puerile and weak attachment; for though

a real and tender attachment owns a confidence, it is partial, a subtle, a self-inflicting feeling, that shrinks from the guileless openness of unreserved communication. (Agnes sighed a response, that expressed her conviction of this truth,) Now, Miss Melvin, we must join Selina; the very important article of dress is not yet decided on for this evening."

Though the communication of lady Mary had caused a happy revolution in the feelings of Agnes, yet she was by no means at ease. A thousand images floated in her imagination, and she longed, yet dreaded, to meet the idol of her affections.

Selina, who read all the effects of the recent conference in the intelligent features of her friend, greeted her return with the affection of a sister. "I see," said she, "that I am *yet* to partake in the felicity of the Cecil family. How grateful to my heart is the assurance that we shall live as sisters!"

Agnes returned the embrace of the liberal Selina, who began busying herself in

the pilgrim's dress, which she purposed wearing in the evening.

"Suppose, my dear girls, you were to adopt lord Glastonbury's whim, and go exactly alike in habit."

Agnes acquiesced cheerfully. Their heights were similar, and she felt a sort of delicate security in the idea of being spared, perhaps, in some instance, from observation, by being mistaken. Lady Mary gave orders to Susan and Fanny to use exertions in forwarding Miss Melvin's habit, reserving its simple ornaments to the taste of the owner. Her ladyship retired.

"How my dear Marian is rejoicing," said Selina, "in the hope of receiving you, Miss Melvin, and the difficulty she will have in keeping Cecil from Grosvenor-square this long day! He loves me now, I believe," continued our heroine, "because I know his Agnes. It is laughable to observe, that however remote our subjects are, they always terminate in some remembered charm at Moss Farm, or some retraced inquietude, that you had experienced with

the Wilmots, over which your active mind had risen superior."

"How generous in you, Miss Asgill," said Agnes, "to forget my wayward and ungrateful reply to your offered friendship!"

"I own," said Selina, "that at the moment my heart condemned you, but our subsequent acquaintance did away the impression, and I soon learned why Selina Asgill was not the friend Agnes Melvin could love."

"Did you?" said Agnes. "Well, I was simple enough to think that one person alone was apprized of my folly, and that was sir Edward Montgomery."

"Montgomery!" said Selina, whose trembling fingers deranged her silk, and made her quite incapable of proceeding.—
"To be sure; why not? He is very amiable, and worthy of confidence."

"I did not confide in him," said Agnes.

"Certainly not," said Selina; "he was doomed to be unsuccessful by your prior attachment."

“ You mistake me entirely,” said Agnes, who now discovered that her companion was agitated and pale. “ Sir Edward Montgomery came to me while at Mr. Wilmot’s. His was an interference of disinterested friendship; he mistook me, as I too late discovered, for my beloved sister. I say too late, because, in my paroxysm, I betrayed my involuntary partiality. Your name—dear Selina, forgive my freedom—your name was mentioned by me, as a proof that I could not be the beloved of Cecil—by him, with all the anguish of wounded feelings, when he vehemently named him for whom my heart trembled, as the most favoured of beings, as possessing the loves of two such women. You will pardon my egotism,” continued Agnes, “ it is a justification I owe myself, and, let me add, an explanation due to the most amiable and generous of men.”

Selina’s eyes met those of Agnes. “ Ah, Agnes!” said our heroine, throwing her head on the shoulder of Miss Melvin, “ you see the movements of my rebel heart.”

“ I hail them,” said Agnes, “ as most propitious omens.”

“ But Montgomery is rash ; his impetuous temper alarms me. I could not trust my peace with one so much the slave of temper. Nor dare I now indulge the partiality that was late my consolation ; for sir Eldred has announced views for my establishment, to which, though ignorant of their nature, I am decidedly incapable of conforming.”

“ You are too much the idol of your valuable relations,” said Agnes, “ to fear their pressing your compliance in a case so important.”

“ It is their tenderness, the unrestrained liberty of opinion that they have ever allowed me,” said Selina, “ that makes any opposition to their first command so heinous in my eyes.”

“ Ah ! do not cloud this sunshine of my heart,” said Agnes, “ by the supposition that it is to be succeeded by witnessing anxiety in the bosom of a friend, whose happiness is so dear to me.”

“I will not anticipate it,” said Selina; “it is ingratitude in one, whose orphan state has been so nobly, so humanely protected.”

To the worldly observer, a gratitude so unqualified in an heiress, one whose rank and expectations needed only to be announced to gain her the smiling patronage of a contending host—to such, the obedient and humble Selina will appear a tame, if not an insipid being. Dare we add, that morality blended so naturally in every feeling of her mind, that though a woman in all the tendernesses and self-delusion of virgin love, its influence neither led her to deplore her fate as the most poignant and lamentable of all distressed damsels, nor admitted the romantic and daring idea of throwing off the parental claim, and acting for herself. In her own family, though sanctioned by a parent's errors, she had had cause to weep over the short-lived happiness that such ill-conceived unions own; and the recent view she had taken of lady Lomond's wearing penance, which seemed blighting her youth

and undermining her constitution, were new arguments in favour of that duty, that, like "charity well conceived, blesses the giver and receiver."

The evening at length arrived. Habited in grey stuffs of proper costume, trimmed with ribbon of the same colour, hoods of lawn, and rosaries by their sides, the pilgrim sisters awaited the arrival of Mrs. Brooks. Sir Eldred and lady Mary viewed the simple beauty of their figures with silent delight. To any but those who knew them well, it would have been difficult to distinguish them. The ringlets of Selina appeared the only probable chance of discovery, and their luxuriance could scarcely be confined by the head-dress she wore.

Mrs. Brooks was announced. "My dear Miss Melvin," said the amiable Marian, "lady Mary has perhaps told you how my day has been passed, and apologized for my want of respect. I can assure you, that to amuse my poor Frank has been my sole employment, to keep him from Grosvenor-square, and reconcile him to the idea of

attending the masquerade. He loaths the idea, and scolds me for detaining him in town. His travelling chaise is ordered for eleven to-morrow morning. Whether he will really go, is a fact on which I must not pretend to decide."

Agnes felt all the tenderness of her kind friend's interest in her happiness, but could not just then find language to express herself.

"Henry waits below," said Marian; "he would not quit the carriage, determined to rely on his discernment in distinguishing between these sister pilgrims. I declare they are 'twin cherries growing on one stalk,' yet owning hearts distinct; or are they heartless, sir Eldred?"

"I will tell you to-morrow," said the baronet.

"Marian," said lady Mary, "this dissension from your usual path is very kind to our young novices. I commit them to your care with pleasure; and your own lively spirits make me think that you

are prepared to engage in the festive scene."

"I enter on it with an ease even new to myself," said Mrs. Brooks, "so little calculated as I am, both from habit and disposition, to mix in such large assemblies; but such a structure for friendship to contemplate, as my Henry has just been sketching to me, has quite exhilarated me. Inigo Jones was a schoolboy compared with my architect; but he waits, and, like all great geniuses when engaged in weighty speculation, will, perhaps, measure time impatiently. Adieu! adieu!" and led by sir Eldred, she proceeded to the carriage. "Remember," continued Marian, "that you are both silent till Brooks recognises you."

They promised, and followed.

"Here we three pilgrims be," said Marian. "Now, Henry, which is Selina?"

"It is by my knowledge in palmistry," said Brooks.

"Mere subterfuge, Henry; the night will not admit of your tracing a line."

“ Let each fair sister draw off her glove, and present me her hand, and I will engage to discover.”

Agnes and Selina gave their hands.

“ It is said that this evening’s gaiety is to be the last festive gala of lady Robert,” said Brooks. “ I wonder if my fair pilgrims will reflect on this night with pleasure, or deplore it, amongst the gaudy pageantry that strike the eye, but take no hold on the imagination. Two unfortunate friends of mine,” continued Brooks, “ will wander like the ghosts of their former selves, I fear—I mean Montgomery and Cecil.” (The nervous tremor of the pilgrims was discernible.) “ Now, Marian,” continued Brooks, “ ask me no more; my science has defined aright.”

He had, indeed, with infinite archness, named his friends so distinctly, as to have ascertained the fine strong chord of affection accurately. The pilgrims were now silent from conscious confusion; each felt that she had betrayed emotion at the men-

tion of that name to which her heart vibrated.

“ I must, as an obedient matron, believe you,” said Marian, who surmised, by the silence of her companions, that he had judged rightly.

“ Here is a great crowd,” said Selina, observing the string of carriages that filled one side of Portland-place ; “ we shall be detained, I fear.”

“ Suppose we walk a little of the pavement,” said Marian.

They assented, and soon reached the door. The elegant mansion of lady Fitz-owen was splendidly illuminated; the staircase seemed one blaze of light. Selina’s astonishment was great on discovering their elegant hostess dressed as the landlady of an inn, unmasked, and seated in a small room, like what is termed the bar at an inn. Lord Robert’s manly figure was observed under a red waistcoat, white apron, and night-cap. With a tankard in his hand, he welcomed his guests, received the tickets, and gave them to his mistress, whom he

declared to be a shrewd puss; that he was a brow-beat *Jerry Sneak*, who dared not speak before her.

Prepared as our heroine was to meet novelty, she conceived a dread of proceeding, on beholding that such exertions were necessary to sustain a character. She ventured an opinion to Mr. Brooks. "Are you not masked, Selina?" said Brooks; "divest yourself of the belief that you will be known, and you will acquire spirit to entertain. Lady Robert's is an arduous part, but she has wit, and is accustomed to the amusement.

"Three pilgrims journeying on their way," said an elegant Spaniard, whose guitar, strung carelessly over his bosom, was occasionally touched with taste.

Brooks dropped the trio.

The Spaniard was gallant. "Say, ladies fair, where are you going?" said the Spaniard, whom the sisters discovered to be lord Berriton.

Marian, with plaintive melody, replied—

"Stranger, we go o'er moor and mountain,
To tell our beads at Agnes' fountain."

"Oh! name for ever lov'd, for ever dear,
Still breath'd in sighs, still usher'd by a tear!"

said Berriton. "Who are you, soft enchantress? I never heard your voice before."

"Nor ever will again in vocal strain," said Marian, "unless in masquerade."

"I will hail the occasion that flung on my listening ear such dulcet sounds. But are your sisters dumb?" regarding Selina and Agnes.

"No, my good lord," said Marian; "their tender years, and the object of their journey, has pressed on their spirits. I have been twice to Loretto, and am their guide. I pray you, my lord, let us pass."

"Not one word, you twin sisters in symmetry?" regarding their figures with attention.

"Should we meet you on our journey," said Selina, "we shall remember the great don, whose streamers floated in the air."

"That voice I know," said Berriton.
"Oh! speak again, bright angel!"

Again Marian warbled—

"The sun has set, and night is coming.

It was appropriate, for a commanding figure of a woman, habited as Night, approached. Lord Berriton was drawn away by a Sailor, who wanted a tune on the *strim-stram*, as he called it, to which he had often danced beneath the heat of a torrid sun, when Mungo played.

"Deign on our humble path to fling the radiance of thy light," said Selina, addressing the brilliant queen.

"Daughters of innocence," said the stately dame, "Vesper shall be your guide," and she glided past the sisters.

Our heroine's spirits rose with the scene. She was now a witness of all that fascination which had first made her anxious to see London, chalked floors, flowery parterres, &c. &c. To shut her heart against the combined elegancies that taste and magnificence had conceived so uniquely, would have been impossible for one of her disposi-

tion ; she possessed genius, and hailed its illuminations in every or the most trivial trait.

The pilgrims journeyed on, often interrupted by French Friseurs, Watchmen, Quakers, &c. &c. An Indian Princess, dressed with infinite taste and magnificence, was seated on an ottoman ; the Spaniard at her elbow touched his guitar. She listened and approved ; her demeanour softened from the regal to the attentive. A black Domino advanced ; he stood some time viewing the group. " How deceiving are appearances !" said the Domino. " These humble Pilgrims heed not yon gaudy thing," pointing to the Spaniard ; " while this Persian Princess sighs for a little of that incense his perverted taste gives to plebeians."

" Presumptuous slave !" said the irritated Princess, " who taught *you* to analyze the feelings of royalty ?"

" Observation and reflection," said the Domino.

" The lovely Thais sits beside thee,
Take the good the gods provide thee."

"I pray you, don Rodríguez del Tobosa d'Almeida, take pity on this Princess."

"*Pardonnez moi,*" said the Spaniard, "I am content with terrestrial interference," and gaily tuning his guitar, he took a polite leave.

A graceful figure in a domino advanced, and addressing the Princess in the Persian language, awaited her reply. She was silent. He spoke in Italian, and lastly in French, to which an ill-conceived and ungrammatical answer was given.

"I followed my love to the shores of England," said the Princess, "and wishing to forget the griefs my native clime gave birth to, I have abjured its language, and am now *anglicised*."

"Then why retain its magnificence, its dress?" asked the Domino.

"Is love always consistent?" asked the Princess.

"I believe not," the Domino replied, and heaving a sigh he passed on.

Our heroine felt almost disposed to an-

swer it by a response; the figure of the stranger, and his voice, had fixed her attention. She turned to gaze after him. He was in conversation with a Gipsy, who seemed to be voluble and troublesome.

“What haven do you seek, meek sisters?” said a mask, who seemed to enter languidly into the spirit of the scene.

“We are going to Loretto,” said Selina; “do you know the clime?”

“I do,” said the mask.

“Methinks your voice is that of sorrow,” said our heroine. “Perhaps the soft clime of Italy contains your promised hopes.”

“England is my haven,” said the Domino, “but my hopes yet want the meed of approbation.”

“Help me,” said Selina to Agnes.

“My sister bids me hail thee, stranger,” said Agnes; “but I am so new to society, and the ‘haunts of men,’ that I fear me much my converse would not sooth thy troubled mind.”

“It owns a wondrous power, a charm beyond *imaginati on*” said the mask, gaz-

ing anxiously on the speaker. "Fair sister, cast that deceptive mask away; confirm my heart's remembrance."

"I dare not," said Agnes, who felt that she held converse with him alone whose influence her heart admitted. "Our sister Louisa would censure me, were I so unmindful of her commands," pointing to Mrs. Brooks, whom the Fortune-Teller was annoying.

"Cannot you make her peace?" said the mask to Selina, entreatingly.

"What peace could a breach of duty find its equivalent in?" said our heroine.

"None," said the mask; "but I will attend your path, and be the shadow of your fortunes."

"It would ill beseem three damsels like ourselves to journey with a companion of your sex," said Selina.

"It would be very wrong," interrupted the flippant Fortune-Teller, who had heard the last sentence. "Come, let me tell you if your stars are propitious."

“ We own no belief in prescience,” said Agnes.

“ Yet palmistry has its powers,” said a gay and sprightly Harlequin.

Agnes and Selina felt the security their masks gave them, for they blushed at the appropriate truth.

“ Pray who made such a gaudy thing as you a judge in serious matters ?” asked the Gipsy.

“ The same that made you wear a mask, to utter those scandals which your everyday face would willingly assert, if custom did not tie down your unlicensed tongue. As it is, be cautious, for see who comes. Remember, you come under the Vagrant Act.”

“ Insolent !” said the Gipsy, with smothered rage.

“ No murmuring, no riot,” said a Watchman, holding up his lanthorn to the face of the Gipsy. “ Ah ! is it you, Moll Brazen ? on what mischief did you sleep last ?”

“ Good Mr. Watchman,” said the Gipsy, affecting her character again, “ I have been very unfortunate lately ; but here is a trifle for you,” and throwing a bribe into his hand, she decamped.

A group of dancers now separated the sisters. Selina found herself in a crowd. Her courage failed her, and in her impatience to find her party, she hurried from room to room.

“ Lady, let me attend you,” said a Minstrel, whose softened manners and effeminate figure announced the divine Antonio Zephyr. “ Ah ! what lurking mischiefs are hid in those beauteous ringlets !

“ Love walks the mazes of thy hair.”

The power to reply was not our heroine's. While the embarrassment of her manner evinced her newness and want of fashion, it greatly added to the gaiety of her observers.

“ Thou art troubled, friend,” said a Quaker, of most prepossessing figure. “ Come, take my arm. Verily, friends,” said the

Quaker, waving her hand graciously, "thy gaze doth discomfort the maiden. Leave us, I pray thee."

"Sweet Ann Lovely," said the Minstrel, "how didst thou escape thy four guardians? Say, is Feignwell here?"

"Stranger, I know thee not," said the Quaker; "and thy sex are all of the family thou hast named."

"Witty, 'pon honour," said an Author, whose deranged dress, meagre figure, and news-asking eye, were characteristically expressive of his assumption.

"Tremble, sweet innocents, before that cruel spectre," said a Domino; "you are the very subjects for his pen."

"Our unassuming lives," said Selina, "are little worthy to excite the genius of an author."

"You are in the infancy of fashion," said the Domino; "the pensive nun, or modest pilgrim, would feed his pen with many a horrid thought. Even thy transparent innocence," addressing the Quaker, "whose purity outvies thy lawn in white-

ness, would offer to his roving fancy subject for profanation."

"Or, if either of you ladies have lost a pig," said a well-dressed Clown, "he can make a monstrous good song about it." The Author, the Domino, and even the ladies, were irresistibly impelled to laugh. There was a *naïveté*, an archness about the Clown highly amusing.

"Say, honest Hob," said the Author, "canst thou read? or how didst thou hear of me?"

"And please your honour," said the Clown, "I have *heard* of you ever since I was born, but never *saw* you till now."

"Come, tell me, then, who am I?"

"They say you are the Devil in my country," said the Clown.

"Excellent!" said the Author. "Come, tell me from whence you are? I will visit your country."

"I'm too cunning for you there, mister Devil," said the Clown; "I never will put myself in your worship's power knowingly; and as I am told that whenever you find

an old castle, you make out murder stories about it, and scare the villagers, *I* wont be the cause of bringing such a plague upon my neighbours. Young women, you had best get out of his way ; he may throw a spell about you," and the Clown departed.

" You do not fear me," said the Author. " Gentle sisters, list to a poet's tale."

" Hence, serpent," said a Domino, " nor breathe your amorous lore," and whirling the meagre spectre by the arm, he took his place. " Two of your modest garb seek you, fair Pilgrim," said the Domino.

" Ah ! where ?" said Selina, with eagerness.

" Shall I brave the danger of escorting you to them ?" asked the Domino.

" The danger !" said Selina ; " I fear none."

" But I do," said the Domino, with a sigh.

" The heart of our heroine trembled to its vibration, yet fearful of betraying herself, she asked him " to direct her, and spare himself from danger."

“Is it compassion or indifference that dictates this command?” asked the mask.

“Do not detain me,” said our Pilgrim; “see you not that I am on a mission?” pointing to her dress.

“I see it,” said the Domino. “But one question,” and taking her hand, he said, “what can be the object of her pilgrimage, whose heart is affianced, and whose fate is immutable, unless you go to offer gratitude for the peculiar blessings of that fate?” said he, mournfully.

“Perhaps,” said Selina, and she stopped.

“Go on,” said the mask, impatiently.

“Perhaps I go to atone for my errors, errors which——”

At that moment the Spaniard, who thought the figure before him the very counterpart of his Agnes, advanced. Selina was glad of the interruption; her heart was ebbing on her lips; his intervention was a rescue.

“Lady, one glance from those soft eyes would animate your slave; I prithee throw that cruel mask aside. My throbbing heart

salutes your figure's grace with blest presentiment. Sure you are my bosom's mistress !”

“ *Your bosom's mistress !*” said the Domino, contemptuously ; “ who names pollution with angelic purity ?”

“ That voice,” said the Spaniard, with roused feelings, “ announces a foul enemy. Though in my assumed character I wear no stiletto, remember, sir, a sword is my weapon against insult, and shall be drawn to defend my honour against the insidious assassin of my happiness.”

“ Great and mighty Spaniard,” said the Domino, coolly, “ talk not of war in such a presence ; but if the occasion deserves any notice, here is my card ; you will know where to find me.”

“ Heaven forbid !” said Selina, snatching the card, and tearing it to atoms ; “ would you change a scene of mirth to crime ? Oh ! where shall I go ?”

“ Mark me,” said the Spaniard, “ though he has torn from my heart every hope of happiness, beware, most beloved of women,

how you listen to his vows. Adieu! we shall meet again," added he, addressing the Domino.

"Perhaps so," said the Domino, with ineffable contempt.

Selina immediately conceived that Ber-riton had mistaken her for Miss Melvin; yet such are the incongruities of love, she startled at the bold assertion of the mortified peer; and though Agnes had recently quieted all her doubts, she now admitted the belief that Montgomery loved Agnes. Her heart chilled at the supposition. Her manner became distant; and Montgomery, who was actually her attendant, felt a sensible diminution in the favour of his fair incognita.

"That odious Spaniard," said the Domino, "with his egregious mistakes—the idiot, it was not sufficient that he should step in at the very moment my feelings were wrought up to the very *acmé* of curiosity, but his error has named me as a purloiner of affections, as a designing villain."

Selina felt it necessary to say something, lest the real state of her feelings should be discovered. "I wonder not," said she, "that the amiable and unprotected being for whom his lordship mistook me should claim your regard; I esteem her as a sister, nor do I think any man need blush to own the influence of her unassuming character."

The unsteadiness of her voice might, to a man of more vanity than her companion, have given all the self-assurance that modern love required; but the ardent Montgomery was too anxious to clear his impeached gallantry, to listen even to the mistress of his heart.

"In this particular, allow me to think with yourself," said the Domino. "I admire, I respect your amiable friend. Many are the errors of my nature, but inconstancy, good Heavens! what a supposition! Nor have I merit in this; my presumption may deserve chastisement, but after such a homage as my soul delights to dwell on, shall a glimmering planet fix my worship to its rays?"

“ You said that my pilgrim friends were seeking me,” said Selina, whose heart bounded to her lips as she listened to her soul’s idol; “ let me, as a pilgrim, ask your guidance to them.”

The Domino bowed acquiescence, and feeling her request as a prohibition to any further illustration of his passion, he silently dwelt on the conviction that her fast-approaching union forbade her listening to the most remote mention of it.

“ What monstrous folly has been mine !” said a Domino, whom our heroine recognised as the one she had left with Marian and Agnes. “ Dear girl, when sent by your anxious sisters to discover you, could I have believed it was Selina ?”

“ How did you discover me ?” said Selina.

“ Your hair, those saucy ringlets, have brought me to my senses. Tell me, who are the waiting pair whose commands I have obeyed in seeking you ?”

“ Truth must not be spoken in masquerade,” said Selina ; “ but I will accompany

you, and trust to your discernment to develop who they are."

"This gentleman," said Cecil, for it was he who now attended our heroine, "has been your protector." He bowed respectfully, and thanked him.

Montgomery bowed a haughty salute. "This then," thought he, "is the husband elect."

Proud man, drest in a little brief authority, how insupportable is thy arrogance! Never was there less liberality accorded to the mildness of polished and unembarrassed ease! Cecil was a stranger to Montgomery; he considered him as having been an eligible associate, because Miss Asgill permitted his attendance; and though he had not now that claim on Selina which had once been deemed indispensable to his happiness, he retained an affection such as a brother would delight in exercising. No sooner did he recognise in the Pilgrim he was seeking the esteemed and lovely Selina, than a quick succession of ideas floated on his fancy. The voice and figure of

one of the Pilgrims had deeply impressed him with the belief that Miss Melvin was of the party. The vague reply of our heroine helped to confirm his hopes. "They wait," said he, "let us hasten to them."

Montgomery looked on with jaundiced eye; yet steady in his purpose, he avowed his intention of accompanying her to her party.

Selina saw the discomforture of sir Edward, and strove, by her unembarrassed manner, to subdue his ire. She chose a method least likely to stem his ardent feelings.

"Who is that voluble Spaniard?" said Cecil; "some trifling son of fashion, no doubt. What rank does he own?"

"He is a peer," said Selina, naming him, "a very brilliant star, I can assure you."

"He is a troublesome sort of personage," said Cecil; "I have been much tempted to discompose his harmony more than once."

Though Berriton knew he had so recently left Miss Melvin in Berkshire, Miss Asgill and Agnes had puzzled him often

during this evening. When in the actual presence of his mistress, he had addressed her in his usual hyperbolical way; and when Selina, with Montgomery, crossed his path, his love became tinctured with jealousy, and all his doubts, with respect to sir Edward, were confirmed.

“Your sisters are here,” said Montgomery to Selina.

The Pilgrims greeted each other.

Marian, who had as much as possible avoided speaking, pressed the hand of Selina, while Agnes drew her arm through her's.

The Fortune-Teller approached. “Shall I not guard you against dangers, sweet innocents?” said the Gipsy.

“Assuredly,” said Selina.

“You must cross her hand with gold,” said a Domino; “she is very mercenary.”

Selina obeyed.

The Gipsy proceeded. “You are now in company with your husband,” said she; “yet the world is deceived, and will be greatly astonished when your choice is announced.”

"Ridiculous," said Selina, "and wholly untrue; you are no prophetess. Tell me where I am going."

"Very soon into Worcestershire."

"That is correct," said Selina, "and will suffice."

Agnes put her hand into the Gipsy's. "You are likewise in company with your husband; I mean the man you will marry, though *he* is not conscious of it."

Agnes affected to laugh, but drawing away her hand, appeared desirous of avoiding the diviner.

"And what say you to me?" said Mrs. Brooks.

"That you are out of your sphere," said the Gipsy, taking her hand; "for you would sooner be in your nursery than here, though taste and elegance court your eye."

"You are a most sagacious witch," said Marian; "I wish I could trace you."

"What is my fate?" said Montgomery, throwing gold into the Gipsy's palm.

"Your's is, by Providence, a path of

blooming promise ; but your own folly blinds you. Pursue your own happiness with the same firmness you ever bestow on that of others, and you will ultimately reach the goal."

"Fortune has invested me with the power to minister to ease," said Montgomery ; "but Hope, whose beauteous semblance alone could cheer my heart, has wholly deserted me."

"I know you have banished the fair vestal from your presence," said the Gipsy ; "restore her to the place once appropriated for her ; I will not promise to animate a *statue* for you, but I bid you to admit her influence, and *dare* to be happy."

"I would give something to know who you are," said Montgomery.

"You think yourself above my art," said the Gipsy to Cecil, "but know, I do not study by halves."

Cecil asked her magical interposition in a sarcastic voice. "You thought to travel on the coming day ; you have changed your purpose ; tell me why ? (Cecil hesi-

tated). Even you, grave sir, with all the great family of human nature, are subject to fits of imagination:—but I have an appointment,” said the Gipsy, “and am to attend some young ladies *at home*. Remember my predictions,” and she scampered away.

“A pleasant mask,” said Marian.

“It was a man,” said Selina, “and we have been duped by the belief that it was the Gipsy who first addressed us. But here *she* comes.

“Ladies, allow me to guard you against imposition,” said the Gipsy; “a fellow has artfully availed himself of my little absence, and practised my art; believe not the vulgar fibber, who has, I find, disgraced the science by telling unfashionable truths. Let me have the pleasure to tell your fortunes.”

“You shall tell mine,” said Selina, “if you choose; for I should like to define between an unfashionable truth-telling fibber and a polite practitioner.”

“ Did truth blend in the late definition ? ” said Montgomery, in a whisper to Selina.

“ I dare not utter an unfashionable truth before this lady,” said our heroine, parrying the question.

“ It is now too late to recede,” said the mischievous Gipsy, “ or I would tell you, you have rejected virtue, and avow the powerful influence of vice.”

“ Whether truth or falsehood,” said Selina, “ it is a bold assertion ; but it can never be too late to reject error.”

“ Pardon me,” said the Watchman we have before named ; “ this vagrant has prowled the town for many years, yet she does not recant her errors, or make one step towards propriety. I thought I had warned you,” said he, addressing the shrinking Gipsy.

“ It is very odd ; you are not contented with having roused me once to-night, Mr. Watchman, but you must continue to persecute me.”

“ Aye, and prosecute you too,” said the Watchman. “ Go, comfort your dupe,

your princess, whose folly is scarce less conspicuous than your vice: and, hark ye, beware how you *break scals*. Remember, there are deeds which speak with most miraculous organ."

"Let me go, let me go," said the Gipsy, and she hastily quitted the astonished group.

"Verily, a rude and troublesome man of noise hath terrified me," said the young Quaker, addressing the Pilgrims; "wilt thee protect me?"

An unanimous affirmative was the reply.

"Forgive me," said the Quaker, "but mine eye will direct me to the damsel with whom I late conversed. This is she," and she placed her arm through Selina's.

"How could you distinguish me?" said our heroine.

"By those ringlets, which the people of your sort would called love-locks, mazy tresses, &c."

"And what do you *term* them, sweet maiden?" said Montgomery, addressing the Quaker.

“ Graceful ornaments of bounteous Nature, friend, which, being meekly worn, are well bestowed.”

“ I do not wonder to meet liberality in your *sect*,” said Montgomery ; “ but your sex, generally speaking, are not prone to comment on each other’s charms.”

“ Hast thou drawn this line from thy own feelings ?” said the Quaker, archly.

“ No — Heaven is my witness,” said Montgomery ; “ I trust neither partiality nor prejudice shall make me illiberal.”

The Quaker drew him aside. “ What thinkest thou of him, yon Domino, who standeth by the Pilgrim ?” (It was Cecil.)

“ Say, does he wear thy esteem ?”

“ I do not exactly know him,” said Montgomery.

“ And yet thou couldst not lay thy hand upon thy heart, and say, I will esteem, I will serve him.”

“ I do not know him,” said Montgomery.

“ But have, by *guess*, discovered that he is not acceptable to thee,” said the Quaker.

“ Is it prejudice or partiality for a person

thou dost not *know* that has made thee thus liberal?"

"Ingenious critic!" said Montgomery, "who taught thy placid nature the intricacies of my wayward heart?"

"That Deity," said the Quaker, spreading her hand on her bosom, "who wounds the timid and the strong."

"Say, fair incognita," said Montgomery, "can the services of such a one as I befriend you?"

"In that we differ," said the Quaker; "we are born to suffer, but *concealment* is our safety."

A mask habited as Simon Pure advanced. "Why talkest thou with this black thing?" said he, addressing the Quaker. "Verily, Ann, thou art in danger."

"I tell thee, Simon, thou art not he whom my heart rejoiceth to meet," said the Quaker; "trouble me not;" and she joined the party of our heroine.

Simon Pure followed. "It is my plain coat that thou despisest," said the mask;

“ if I wore the habit of war, thou wouldst regard me, maiden.”

The Quaker sighed. Simon started, and pausing for a moment, he added—“ Verily, damsel, that sigh did reach my heart; wilt thou forgive my urgent suit? Simon shall trouble thee no more.”

“ Harriet,” said Agnes, in a low voice, to the Quaker, “ how is it that you have not recognised me in all this time?”

“ Good Heavens !” said Harriet Wilmot, “ is it you? Dear Agnes, you partly know my folly; who is that mask?—can you guess?”

“ I believe it to be him your heart acknowledges,” said Agnes; “ but I will speak to him.—“ The habit you have chosen does not suit you, colonel Feignwell,” said Agnes; “ I know you.”

“ Thou art fanciful, damsel,” said the Quaker, “ but mistaken.”

“ Why would you disown me now,” said Agnes, “ when surrounded by friends?

I claim that honour which you voluntarily offered under other circumstances."

"The lovely variety of fancy that thy sex possess shines in thy playful vivacity; I hail thy mirth as proof of internal happiness, but own not thy alliance."

"Obdurate being!" said Agnes.

Cecil, who had been drawn into conversation with a Flower Girl, who was elaborately descanting on the beauties of nature, advanced, just as the Spaniard had mixed in the group; mistaking Selina for Miss Melvin, in all the languishment of romance, he exclaimed—

"I stood in the way of my fair,
But she purposely turn'd her aside;
I knelt with a woe-begone air,
Yet gain'd not a look from her pride."

Montgomery, whose jealous feelings and high sense of the delicacy that should be observed towards a female, could ill brook the freedom and gesture of his lordship, seized the kneeling Spaniard, and with an ironical tone of voice, proceeded—

“ Then get out of the way of *my* fair,
Nor dare me your folly to chide ;
See, she shrinks from your insolent air,
And your love is offence to her pride.”

“ Bravo ! bravo ! ” exclaimed the party.

“ A devilish good parody,” said the Spaniard, rising in rage ; “ but I must see some of your prose, *before* to-morrow’s sun gilds the western sky, sir,” addressing Montgomery.

“ I will answer your sonnet, come when it may,” said Montgomery.

Selina, whom an emphatic monosyllable in the extempore lines of sir Edward had made thoughtful, caught the last words of Montgomery. Their taunting sense was ill calculated to appease the enraged peer. Mrs. Brooks saw danger in the mistake, and begged Agnes to clear the point, by avowing herself to Berriton, if possible. The arrangement was scarcely made, when a Link-boy, with thoughtless mirth, waved his link amidst the ladies. For some minutes no damage appeared to have been done, but on a sudden a blaze issued from the head-dress of Selina. A shriek from the

Quaker announced the accident. Her hood and hair seemed enveloped in a light flame. Regardless of the presence of the supposed husband, Montgomery threw his domino round the astonished girl, who, scarcely conscious of her danger, found herself in the arms of Montgomery. The flame was soon extinguished, but the confusion and fright caused a suspension of sense ; and when they were exulting in the danger being past, she fell lifeless into the arms of her supporter.

The group dispersed every way for water, drops, and all usual applicatives.

Montgomery had removed her mask. The pallid hue of her face, the danger she had passed, and, above all, the melancholy delight his entranced heart owned at holding her thus, wrought his feelings above the prudence of system.

Selina opened her eyes.—“ Where am I ? ” said she, looking around her.

“ Fear not,” said Montgomery, “ all will be well. Tell me, ah ! Selina, assure me that you forgive my presumption,” for she withdrew from his support.

"I am strangely confused," said our heroine. "Where are my friends?"

"Those *you* look for," said sir Edward, sighing, "have fled to get assistance for you; and why exclude me from so enviable a distinction?" continued he.

"I believe I am greatly indebted to your care," said Selina, giving her hand to Montgomery; "but indeed I feel ill."

Sir Edward retained the hand she had given. A tear fell on it. "And yet you give this pledge, this inestimable treasure to another? But here I swear," cried he, raising it respectfully to his lips, "I will not stay to witness it."

"Here she is," said Cecil, who, followed by the affectionate group, now advanced, with anxiety depicted on their features.

"How did you contrive to bear her hither?" said Marian, addressing Montgomery. "We have sought you through the apartment we left you in, and were actually despairing."

"Air was necessary," said Montgomery, "and the intelligent Gipsy lent his aid."

This was the case. The Gipsy, who arrived at the period of our heroine's fainting, assisted sir Edward in removing his lovely burden. Nay more, he had used an ambiguous, yet somewhat consoling sort of conversation with Montgomery, whose spirits, all in alarm, and conscious of a melancholy pleasure in being instrumental to the safety of his beloved Selina, took the impression of the moment, and was transiently happy. The arrival of Cecil, however, and the unaffected attention that he accorded Selina, threw the deluded lover again into despair. He retired from the conspicuous manner he had observed, silently to mourn his fate, and watch with jealous eye "the collected and phlegmatic Cecil," as he termed him.

To the proposals of her friends to quit the party, our heroine steadily refused her assent; not that individually she would not have preferred it, but the plan of development had not yet taken place; the happiness of those she loved was always a principle for her active disposition to meet

with avidity. She owned no *unbecoming*, softness of character, nor yielded to slight alarms. Her constitution, naturally healthful, though it betrayed her into the feminine indisposition we have related, soon gained its elasticity, so as to give her the power of appearing to again enter into the spirit of the scene.

The accident had made a general buzz in the room, and the effects of it made our heroine known; her mask was gone, and the hood destroyed. A veil and mask from lady Robert were procured, and she was again going to move towards the motley group, when the Minstrel approached.—“Lady, thy obduracy has been punished,” said he; “I have wept over the tresses the cruel element destroyed, and will tune my harp to tell the sorrow of thy lovers for their loss.”

Selina smiled, but owned her delight in harmony so great, that the insignificancy of the subject should not rest in her consideration. The Minstrel bowed, and with a strain of exquisite harmony charmed his

auditors. The words were extempore and poetical. The party were profuse in praise, while Montgomery begged him to repeat it. The Minstrel complied. Again the meed of praise was given, when a Domino pushed into the midst of the group, and, with a harsh voice, declared he was sick of deception. "Come with me," said he, "I will take you to the Cave of Trophonius, and there, in spite of love films, deceptive veils, and black masks, I will make you speak truth."

The party, laughing, followed the cynic. A beautiful and well-constructed cave, appropriately situated, presented itself to view. Selina was astonished at the ingenuity of its appearance; it seemed the very structure that fancy attaches to the classical definition. A venerable figure, habited in Grecian costume, waved his hand at their entrance, while the hoarse-voiced Domino was in an instant recognised in a garb of inferior quality.

"Venerable father," said Cecil, "how are we to estimate you?—have you passed

your eight days probation?—May we consult you as the Delphian Oracle?”

“It is enough that you have a visual view of *Truth*,” said the Oracle. “Son, remember my reputed sire, nor doubt my power or wisdom. Agamedes,” said the Oracle to his companion, “lead on.”

The cave was closed at the entrance by which the company had advanced, and a sudden movement of a spring opened a scene that seemed enchantment—a view of Mount Parnassus—the Muses’ Temple, and the Fountain of Hippocrene flowing from the mountain. While the party were expressing their wonder and delight, the adroit Agamedes, aided by the Oracle, cut the strings of the masks, and each stood confessed.

“Agnes! dear Agnes!” said Cecil, catching the hand of the affrighted girl, “how prophetically have my footsteps haunted you while thus disguised!”

Montgomery stood motionless. The expressions of Cecil, and the genuine embarrassment of Agnes, to whose passion he

was no stranger, seemed to absorb his faculties.

“ You,” said the Oracle, “ whose pale cheek bears the certain indication of a Delphian consultation,” addressing our heroine, “ why stand you thus? You have learned nothing new; it is for him, that motionless statue, to ask and learn.”

Selina crimsoned. Her agitation was nearly depriving her of that self-possession in which her delicacy ever took sanctuary.

“ May I trust my senses,” asked Montgomery, with energy. “ Speak, thou venerable sage !”

“ Hope,” said the Oracle, gravely; “ more would be offensive to the purest nature that ever mortal looked up to.”

Agamedes, in an altered tone of voice, added—“ *Statue*, thou art animated; draw from its destined cell the Parian goddess, woo her path, and deserve her smiles.”

“ This scene, so wonderfully wrought,” said Montgomery, addressing Selina, “ yet wants the confirmation of an approving voice. Ah! tell me, if where my heart

has paid its silent homage, it may dare to be eloquent? Selina, mistress of my fate, bless me by one accent!"

"I have *once*," said Selina, in a voice scarcely audible, "judged for myself, and erred; now, the liberty to *do* so is not mine. Spare me, sir Edward, I feel incompetent to reply to you."

"One suggestion yet," said Montgomery, "if unbiassed in your sentiments, I might hope for favour."

"I don't know—I believe so," said Selina, trembling, while the arm of Montgomery was her unsteady support.

"Enough, enough," said sir Edward, as he pressed her unreluctant hand; "forgive my temerity, but reflect on what I have suffered, and pity will not be denied me!"

The sigh that escaped the lips of Selina seemed to express a world of sympathy: and Montgomery, for the first time since he had known our heroine, seemed to respire with ease.

"Where are our friends?" said Selina, on discovering that they were alone in the

outer apartment of the cave. The unity of this remark sunk deep in the grateful heart of the lover.

“The collusion,” said Montgomery, “is of a species so rare, combining friendship’s disinterested offices with the glare of an unmeaning and tangible entertainment, that though every feeling of gratitude is awakened in my bosom for the copious share *my heart* owns in the *denouement*, I am lost in wonder, and believe that *friendship*, like love, may be complex.”

“With a saturnine misanthropist,” said a voice from within the cave, “whose blunted and selfish feelings have secluded him from the warmth of animating esteem, such things may appear complex; let him learn from what his folly would have secluded him, had not *one* friend possessed the power of drawing him to partake in this night’s festivity.”

“’Tis Henry!” said Montgomery, darting forward. “Dear Brooks, let me thank you.”

“Stop,” said the sage, advancing from

the cave, "'tis I who avow myself the friend of lovers."

"Nor will you wonder," said the hoarse Agamedes, "when you behold his face."

The sage removed the hoary mask, while Agamedes did the same, when lord Glastonbury and Brooks stood before them.

"My lord!" said Selina.

"Most generous of friends!" said Montgomery.

"No comments," said lord Glastonbury; "be happy, and let me live to see you so. Some impatient visitors now wait admittance; hence, join your party in a supper-room adjoining this; they attend your presence."

Montgomery was going to lead our heroine on, when Brooks, who felt for the newness of her situation, and the observation that her appearance might excite, took her hand. "Dear Selina," said the light-hearted Henry, "does palmistry want weight in your estimation, or shall I define by some other method?"

"You are presuming," said Selina, af-

fecting cheerfulness, "or rather spoiled; by being made the unreserved partner of the gentlest heart in the world, you have acquired confidence, and believe that every disposition will yield to your arrogance; but know I am not——"

"You are not what you are going to announce yourself," interrupted Brooks, "but the counterpart of one whose heart is invaluable. Mend the being who woos your love, for he needs it."

Montgomery readily accorded a response, and opening a cabriole door, our heroine found herself amongst the little supper-party. Marian hastened to her side, while Agnes, blushing from conscious happiness, advanced with Cecil to greet Selina's return.

"Have we not reason to be angry," said Selina to Agnes, "at the stratagem imposed on us?"

"I thought so too," said Agnes, "till Mrs. Brooks reminded me that no stranger was of our *coterie*, and that our feelings might be surprised, but not offended."

“ But mine,” said Selina, with a sigh, “ should have been spared.”

“ Hushed be all murmurings and discontent,” said Marian; “ remember, as the wife of the Gipsy, I foretell all will be well.”

“ Was Brooks the Gipsy ?” said Selina.

“ Most assuredly,” said Marian. “ He has, this evening, assumed the varieties of Prometheus himself. You know the purity of his motives, my dear girls, and their objects. Remember, though he has perhaps facilitated what a rigid delicacy might have uselessly protracted, you are yet the agents of your own happiness.”

Selina shook her head.

“ Shake not your wily locks at me,” said Marian, gaily, “ I will not be contradicted. See, here are some wan countenances who have been with the Oracle.”

The Spaniard, Quaker, and three or four other masqueraders, entered the room. Their masks were off, and Berriton no sooner recognised Miss Melvin, than he darted forward, and, kneeling at her feet, poured

forth a rhapsody that confused Agnes, and alarmed the heart of Cecil.

“ Rise, my lord,” said Agnes; “ this position becomes not you to adopt, or me to attend to.”

“ Inexorable, cruel girl !” said the Spaniard, “ what powerful inducement brought you hither? My heart, true to your beauty’s fascination, has, as in a dream, felt the magic of your presence, through this night’s gaiety ; tell me by what stratagem you thus bless my sight ?”

“ My lord,” said Cecil, advancing with a serious and impressive manner, “ your lordship has avowed your feelings to resemble a dream ; permit *me* to awaken you from that dream, and avow myself the protector of Miss Melvin.”

“ Sir !” said Berriton, rising with astonishment, “ by what right do you interpose your authority ?”

“ By her own permission,” said Cecil, taking the hand of Agnes, and drawing her to a seat on which Selina, Montgomery, and Mrs. Brooks were sitting.

“Vastly odd!” said Berriton, when, seeing Montgomery seated by Miss Asgill, he advanced. “Upon my soul, my dear fellow,” said he, “I believe I have been cursedly out. These incomprehensible and indefinable trio have led me into some inadvertencies; pray tell me, set me right.”

“Did you know me?” said Montgomery, “when your love-like rancour vented itself in such murdering terms?”

“Certainly I did,” said Berriton; “but who was your companion?”

“Is it necessary I should explain?” said sir Edward.

“It was I,” said Selina, who feared lest the little bending nature of Montgomery should reanimate his lordship’s fighting propensity.

Montgomery smiled at the anxious countenance of his companion, though he felt grateful for its unequivocal inference.

“Who is that *sombre* quiz whom Miss Melvin *allows* to protect her?” said Berriton, viewing Cecil through his eye-glass.

"He is my brother, my lord," said Marian, with good humour.

"Pardon a jealous, a distracted lover," said Berriton, in a supplicating attitude.

"I freely forgive you, my lord," said Marian, "but hope your malady leaves you the wish to charm your listeners by some sweet melody."

His lordship strung his guitar, and sang a Spanish air, expressive of his despondence. Cecil regarded him with surprise; and though the frivolity of his character amused, yet it created a sort of contempt that he could ill conceal. He owned the very passion that his lordship had appeared to deplore, and he felt how incompatible with delicacy was that passion, which made its object conspicuous to any but its selected, its acknowledged love. Those, however, who knew the peer, received his attempt with the praise it deserved.

The Quaker had been some time in conversation with our heroine. The gentle Harriet was amusing her, by reciting the

Oracle's prediction, when the cabriole opened, and the Princess, Simon Pure, Night, the Flower Girl, and several Dominos entered. Our little party discovered in these personages, Miss Wilmot, colonel Stratton, lady Halbert, Mrs. Hanthin, and others that they knew.

"What a ridiculous *outré* introduction was this cave business!" said Isabella. "Dear Miss Asgill, did you speak to the cynic?"

"I did," said Selina.

"What an odious creature! He quite frightened me; were you not dreadfully alarmed?"

"Not alarmed," said Selina; "it was altogether a very *nouvelle* and well-managed surprise."

"Really, then, the creature favoured *you*, I suppose," said Isabella. "I wish I knew who he was. Why, my demure sister," said Isabella, "is it you?" observing Harriet. "Is it chance or design that has dressed the youthful colonel in the habit of the same sect?"

Harriet was replying, when the person in question advanced. "Would that my age permitted the hope that *sympathy* had effected what would be so congenial to my feelings!"

"Horrible!" said Isabella, shuddering. "Good Heaven! colonel, are you serious? Pray when did you make love last? Surely they must order things differently in India to what we do here—make love in public!"

"In that dress," said the colonel, "to profess want of information seems out of character, most puissant Princess; but I must tell you, that in Asia, as in Europe, there is a commercial sort of love, in which all men possessing money may traffic. I shrunk from the blushless consignments, and wear the years that now excite your wit and eloquence, with more ease than I could have shared them with the most beautiful of your sex, whom my fortune could have purchased."

"The query is," said Isabella, with matchless effrontery, "whether you might

expect election, but on such a stable perspective."

The colonel bowed and smiled.

Harriet, with cheeks mantling deep crimson, exclaimed—"Isabella! sister! good Heavens! what lengths your vivacity leads you!"

Her hand was extended. The colonel, taking it tenderly, said—"Use not such warmth, sweet girl. Pardon my having excited the *vivacity* of Miss Wilmot; but believe, I am indifferent to ridicule, yet painfully alive to any thing that should cause *you* uneasiness."

"And I," said Harriet, "blush."

"For what do *you* blush?" said colonel Stratton, taking a seat beside her, while Isabella, who had just discovered Miss Melvin, hastened to annoy her by inquiries and impertinence.

"I blush at Isabella's blindness and prejudice," Harriet replied; "but, indeed, colonel, you must not take offence; she does not mean any thing."

"Were she of any other family," said the

colonel, "I might feel disposed to make her pertinacious foible recoil on herself; but to lash her, at the hazard of wounding a sensitive heart, is a mode I have not courage to adopt."

"You are always kind," said Harriet, in a voice of grateful approbation.

"It requires," said colonel Stratton; "even a greater number of years than *I* even own, or a mind less susceptible to unaffected beauty, to listen to this praise. Harriet Wilmot," continued he, taking her hand, "you have taught me to regret the havoc that a soldier's life more than his age has made on the person before you. Sweet girl, be happy; and may Heaven bless you, is the fervent prayer of Stratton!"

"Perhaps," said Harriet, while her trembling hand seemed to detain that of the colonel.

"Perhaps what?" interrupted colonel Stratton, while his countenance seemed animated by a sudden gleam of hope.

"Why, perhaps," and she averted her

head, "Harriet Wilmot does not wish you other than you are."

"Is it possible?" said the colonel, again seating himself. "Most ingenuous and lovely girl, may I offer to your acceptance the devotion of a life that could only be gilded by your presence?"

"For once," replied the amiable Harriet, "permit me to name a subject that has never been considered by me before—your age. Had one of years equal to myself asked my confidence, I should not have observed the same candour. The instability of professions, and the frivolity that marks even the most sacred engagements, must make a female, not exceedingly devoted to fashion, cautious. You, who possessed that interest in my feelings which I have so simply replied to, required an assurance of the sort, for vanity is not in your disposition. If I have exceeded the rules that delicacy would prescribe, it will be my consolation that I have betrayed myself to the most honourable of men."

“ Angelic girl !” said the colonel, “ how discriminate and delicate are your conclusions ! The effervescence of youth, buoyed up by its hand-maid, Hope, may offer, and is privileged to bow at Beauty’s shrine ; but the man whom *forty* summers have closed upon, should alone repose his hopes of happiness on the candour of a Harriet Wilmot.”

“ Do you perceive, fair damsel,” said Isabella, looking at her sister and the colonel, “ that you two are *tête-à-tête*, and have been so this half hour ?”

“ It is a perception of which I am happily sensible,” said the colonel. “ Who have you been quizzing ?” continued he, endeavouring to give her a topic, and draw her attention from Harriet, who sunk beneath her gaze.

“ Why, really, I have been highly amused,” said Isabella. “ Our lady governess is here, Harriet.”

“ I have had the pleasure of being with her some time,” said Harriet.

“ Oh, aye ; so she told me. Well, I

declare I believe there is something vastly interesting in dependance, for Berriton stands sighing at a distance ; the clerical Adonis, Mr. Cecil, seems her shadow ; and Miss Asgill, who I thought was on the point of being matronised with him, seems quite at ease, while her quondam lover is whispering soft nothings to Melvin. I begin to think that I should like to appear dependant myself."

"Heaven forbid !" said Harriet and the colonel, in a breath.

"Why such a pious asseveration?" said Isabella, staring.

"Because you are too handsome," said the colonel, with adroitness, "for so dangerous a situation."

Harriet smiled languidly, but sheltered herself under the colonel's reply.

"Did you ever know any *gentlewoman* so robust and masculine, I must say, as Miss Asgill? Only think of her stopping after such an affecting accident !"

"It is rather unusual," said Harriet, "to see so beautiful a girl so void of affectation

and nonsense as she is; and though I am persuaded she would have quitted the party directly, if she had consulted only herself, I must admire the activity of that disposition which consults the pleasure of others."

"Why, whose happiness or pleasure could she have destroyed by her going?" said Isabella.

"I cannot enumerate all her friends and admirers," said Harriet, "though I class myself amongst the most sincere of them; but Miss Melvin would have been deprived of her entertainment."

"Why, does Melvin stop in Grosvenor-square?" asked Isabella.

"Yes, certainly," replied Harriet.

"Good God! how ridiculous! Well, I declare I think it is quite spoiling a young woman that is dependant."

"Or rather, is it not one of the charming interesting appendages of dependance?" said the colonel.

"I do not know what it is, but I disclaim all such levelling principles."

“ My sweet friend,” said Swivel, who now advanced from the cave, and, unmasked, discovered by her dress the mischievous Gipsy, “ how did that horrible monster behave to you? he has quite deranged me !”

“ By his truths?” said the colonel.

“ No, sir,” said Swivel, “ by his insolence; and, indeed, to find *you* here surprises me, for I thought *you* were the very cynic himself.”

“ Then you find your circle of advisers larger than you had supposed,” said colonel Stratton.

“ Advisers! Sir, I want none,” and she drew the infatuated Isabella away with her.

“ My dear colonel,” said Mrs. Brooks, “ have you been able to make this girl believe that your gallantry has outwitted the caution of her guardians? Is she to be your Ann Lovely?”

“ Her guardians, my amiable friend,” replied the colonel, “ are virtue and candour; but lest, in a world so chequered by licentiousness and folly, the path of inno-

cence should be broken in upon by its votaries, she has allowed a soldier to become her guardian in the devious road. Yes, madam, behold in me the *approved* protector of her future days."

"Fie, colonel," said Harriet, "I must check your babbling. Remember, Mrs. Brooks, we are all in masquerade now."

"You will not presume to utter such a sentence," said Marian, "unmasked, to me; no, Harriet, continue to cherish sentiments so worthy of you, and give its *confidence* to the same good keeping."

"Your advice," said Harriet, "bears an irresistible charm in the systematic happiness of your life. I dare not rebel against your known character, lest Virtue should disown me."

"Judge of my happiness," said colonel Stratton, "by the purity of your own feelings, Mrs. Brooks—of my *vanity*, by the tenaciousness with which I shall study to deserve so invaluable a treasure."

The entrance of lord Glastonbury and Mr. Brooks, unmasked, and in dominos,

called the attention of the company. Those who knew the recent characters they had supported met their notice with approving smiles, while Isabella, Swivel, and a few others, who were yet anxious to discover the satirists, looked with surprise on the father and son, who seemed strangers to the allusions of the curious Swivel in particular.

Lord Glastonbury drew their attention to the elegancies of a light repast, to which he seemed disposed to do justice. The summons was generally assented to. The few mixed fashionables in the party gave a piquancy to the supper that proved highly amusing.

"How I regret that his ——— was not here!" said lady Halbert; "the cave would have suited his scientific taste."

"Pardon me, my lady," said lord Ber-riton, "my friend, the ———, is too good a judge of costume, to have given praise where there was so miserable a disunion of style."

"Illustrate the defects," said Montgomery.

"Why, the temple of Apollo should have been visible in the background; there were numerous deficiencies."

"If not more correct than your lordship's temple," said Montgomery, "we must yet believe the Oracle has read."

"Sir Edward," said Berriton, "surely every schoolboy knows that the Temple of Apollo was a landmark for mariners to avoid the dangers of the coast."

"That a successful votary of the Muses should bear a correct remembrance of the fate of the tenth Muse, is not wonderful," said Montgomery; "or that the White Rocks of Leucates should live in the poet's fancy, when Lebadea, the scene of our Trophonius, should own no charms for him."

"Aye, very true; I believe you are right; but your allusion, sir Edward—why that smile, sir, when the White Rocks were mentioned?"

"Did I smile, my lord," said Montgomery; "I am unconscious of it."

"Perhaps," said lord Glastonbury, "sir

Edward felt that poets were lovers, and we all know lovers are poets."

"Who will deny this?" said Brooks.

"Not you, sir," said Mrs. Swivel; "for like a true sir Bashful Constant, you address your love-lines to your wife."

"Oh, shocking!" said Miss Wilmot, viewing the blushing Marian through her eye-glass.

"It is my modesty that induces this mode, madam," replied Brooks; "mine are vagrant ideas, that shrink from criticism, and repose on love."

"Charming! charming!" said lord Ber-riton. "I am sure you write; let me be favoured with copies."

"Love is jealous, my lord, in some cases," said Mrs. Brooks, "and I guard such treasures as a good pilgrim does her beads."

"Poor dear lady Robert! what an immense fatigue to one of her fragile form!" said Swivel. "She has never once quitted the lobby this evening," continued she,

turning, in a half whisper, to Selina; "but she is disappointed; he did not come."

"Of whom do you speak, madam?" said our heroine.

"Why, the ———. She contrived to be unmasked, and in a negligent dress, to attract his notice."

"Good Heavens!" said Selina, with unguarded warmth, "is it possible, madam, that you can express an opinion so inimical to friendship, and, I may add, delicacy, while under the roof of her you are defaming?"

"Ridiculous, child—defamation!" said Swivel. "Miss Asgill, you will never acquire a knowledge of life, if you cherish such *outré* notions. Why, child, there is not a woman of rank in this town who is not emulous of his favour."

"Aye, that may be," said Selina; "ambition is more or less the inmate of every bosom; and the condescensions of *very* exalted persons is a tribute soothing to vanity; yet there are some I will vouch for

being indifferent even to this. Besides, he is a married man."

"Sweet innocent!" said Swivel, while a malicious smile passed over her features, "what a cogent reason against the admissible tendernesses of high life! What woman is flattered in the present day by the assiduities of single men? They make love to kill time; take a morning range among their unmarried friends, with the same *sang froid* that they lounge through the stables of Tattersal; nay, I will venture to say, their feelings own more attachment in the *last* than in the *first* excursion. No, my dear novice, a life of fashion commences after marriage; there is some triumph for beauty, in beholding the tribute of a wedded heart offered at her shrine. The thousand intricacies and inventions that such situations impose, are wonderfully interesting."

"With such sentiments, madam," said Selina, coldly, "I do not wonder at your being the champion of the personage in

question, whose superior talents and polished manners leave his admirers to regret that the gentler ties of life do not make him as conspicuous as he is qualified to be; but how such unfeminine and destructive principles could have gained ascendancy in the mind of a woman who mixes in select society, is a solecism, if I may be allowed the expression, that I cannot reconcile."

"If my disposition was not the most easy in the world," said Swivel, "I should be monstrously offended with you; but it is *rust*, my dear Miss Asgill, absolute country *rust*, that will wear off; you will yet get the polish of fashion."

"If by fashion you mean the notoriety you have expatiated on, madam, I trust you are deceived in that, as in the present case; I will not ape manners I despise, nor can I feel amused by your colouring of human nature," said Selina.

"Humph!" said Swivel, whose bold nature shrunk from the dignified calmness of candour. "Ah! there is our elegant.

hostess," said the finished hypocrite, and she quitted her unpleasant seat to offer a supporting arm to lady Robert.

Her ladyship declined it, and, passing on, paid her compliments to her guests with the most winning grace. "I quite enjoy this select *coterie*," said her ladyship; "the duchess of —— has cleared my rooms; and now I may ask if you have been amused?"

"Oh, charmed!" said Swivel, in her usual prominent way; "but pray, my lady, who was that odious creature in the cave?"

"I must not divulge," said her ladyship. "Your sagacity will, no doubt, trace it out. - I feel pleasure in observing," she continued, "that the Oracle has not, according to received opinion, robbed the faces of his visitors of their smiles; I see many playful emanations of mirth around me, that gratify my feelings, and must, I am sure, be highly consonant to those of the Oracle."

"Dear lady Robert," said Mrs. Hanthin, "you know the Oracle; do tell me who it

was. You know I am such a lover of nature, and it was so natural."

Lady Robert declared her inability to comply.

"Observe what a simple garb I chose," said Mrs. Hanthin; "a vender of flowers."

"But, my dear Hanthin," said lady Halbert, "I heard you too diffuse in your simple character with one domino, who seemed totally deaf to your Linnæan language."

"Oh the insensible!" said Mrs. Hanthin. "When I had actually descanted on all the rare exotics with which my memory furnished me, he told me that a simple *hearts-ease* had more charms for him than a *corbeillée* of unseasonably forced plants. He had no air with him, and was, I dare say, puzzled by my terms."

"I know he was," said lord Glastonbury; "for I saw his confusion; and I saw him, likewise, in pursuit of a *sensitive plant*, that has long been an object of interest with him. He has found it, and is going to transplant it to a soil in which

he can watch its health, and attend to its culture."

Cecil smiled, while Agnes caught the application of the allegory, in the expressive glance of his lordship; and the minutiae of love furnished her with the fact of seeing Cecil in conversation with a Flower Girl. Those who did not rank amongst the admirers and friends of lord Glastonbury, ever felt a sort of timidity and doubt in his presence; Mrs. Hanthin smiled then because lord Glastonbury smiled; but whether he meant what he said, or was laughing at her, she could not, nor was she at the trouble of defining.

"Pray, my lady," said Miss Wilmot to lady Halbert, "has lady Louisa Strongford and her swain returned yet? Are they forgiven?"

"I am not in the confidence of the family," said her ladyship; "and if I were, I could not possibly reply to you."

"My dear lady Halbert," said Swivel, "this is Piety in pattens indeed; you were

not so scrupulous when the marquis of Parmesan and lady Billet's *tendresse* was the rage; you could talk then."

"I talked then, and now, madam," said lady Halbert, "as I trust a woman of honour should do. When I found that my friendship had been abused, and my house made a sanctuary for vice, I shut my heart against the first, and my doors against the latter. And you know," continued lady Halbert, "that I then took an extensive survey of the merits of my visitors, and made some other exclusions."

Swivel bit her lips, for *she* was one of the proscribed. "I actually pity poor Halbert," said the daring and enraged scandalizer, addressing Harriet Wilmot, who chanced to be near her; "he is gone on a military tour, and his immaculate lady owns the honour of a *noble morning visitor*, whose horses I myself saw parading up and down Devonshire-place above an hour yesterday."

"Indeed!" said Harriet, with an incredulous smile, "and what then?"

“What then !” said Swivel ; “upon my word, Miss Harriet, you are growing quite daring in your opinions.”

“That is extraordinary,” said colonel Stratton, “for she has lately been spared the uncongenial association of the most glaring of her acquaintance.”

“Oh, Mr Cynic !” said Swivel, “you undertake to aid this young lady’s progress in thinking for herself ; but let me tell you, sir, it is a very dangerous and thankless office.”

“You have found it so,” said the colonel, “perhaps ; but our systems differ. And now, madam, I will aid your information. — Your ladyship received a very distinguished visitor this morning,” said colonel Stratton, addressing lady Halbert.

“You know I did, colonel,” said lady Halbert ; “for I believe the length of his ———’s condescension must be attributed to the diffuse and elegant elucidation of the Persian language that you gave him, and the very flattering interest he expressed in

waiting the arrival of a letter from Halbert, which happened while he stopped."

"You see, then, madam," said the colonel, turning to Swivel, "that the loitering grooms are accounted for, and that a very handsome woman is willing to attribute a part of this distinguished honour to the abstruse attempts of a Hottentot's communications. However unwilling I may feel to own a compliment of the sort, I more than rejoice at this public method of expressing my contempt of inuendoes so cruel and ill founded."

Every eye was turned on Swivel. Lord Glastonbury, in the voice that he had assumed when in the cave, exclaimed — "There is no sharper venom than a woman's tongue."

"The Oracle!" said the yet uninformed part of the company.

"My lord," said Montgomery, "this, though from the Oracle, is an assertion to which I never could yield. The natural tenderness of woman defeats, with the suc-

ceeding breath, the slander of the moment gone."

"I agree with you, Montgomery," said lord Berriton; "a woman's rancour, like footsteps in snow, waits but the morning's sun to smooth its surface."

"You speak like *young men*," said lord Glastonbury; "to the virtues, delicacy, and softness of woman, I am the most devoted and unaffected admirer; but when they step beyond the precincts of retired life, when they cease to blush at vice, by *countenancing* its practised children, they lose the name of virtue in my eyes, and I deplore them as fallen angels. It is not enough that they should feel secure in their innocence; the breath of slander should not reach them. They should have courage to be delicate, by daring to be *discriminate*.

"The noxious vermine, that creeps,
A visitor unwelcome, into scenes
Sacred to neatness and repose, may die;
A necessary act incurs no blame.

“ So says the moral and elegant Cowper. In a domestic sense, I would extirpate from society the fiend who would destroy its comfort.”

The animating subject gave an impressive interest to the amiable speaker. He gained the approving voice of all but Swivel and Miss Wilmot. The first, by gestures and grimace, endeavoured to conceal her real feelings, while Isabella felt alone, in sentiment at least; she believed that it was impossible to gain credit for an immediate and sudden change of opinion; she, therefore, though silent, appeared the convert of her ill adviser; a coward in the cause of truth and reason, she felt ashamed to avow her growing belief, and thus fixed the stigma on her character, that a genuine confession of her awakened feelings would have converted to the most active and affectionate interest in her renovated happiness.

“ The streaming light of day now tinged the sky,” and the party began to disperse.

Swivel and the Wilmots were the first to depart. Colonel Stratton, faithful to his beloved Harriet, accompanied them ; Mrs. Hanthin and lady Halbert followed.

Lady Robert, turning to Marian, said—
“ Henceforward, my friend, may my life’s arrangement make me the acknowledged and distinguished partaker of your society ! Fitzowen is not quite apprized of my plans ; the divine lady Mary is my guardian angel : wonder not at the absence of Robert ; he is confined to a whist-table below. To-morrow, Marian, to-morrow shall make Alicia a happy wife, because an affectionate mother ! ”

“ A thousand thanks ! a thousand blessings attend your virtuous resolutions ! ” said Mrs. Brooks ; “ Heaven bless you ! —Adieu ! ”

“ Good bye, my lord,” said lady Robert, extending her hand to lord Glastonbury ;
“ I shall live to be one of your good children, I hope.”

“ You were always one of my favourites,” said lord Glastonbury ; “ every thing is in your power that a good wife could

wish ; exert the energies of your character, and your happiness is perfect."

Our heroine and Agnes quitted the festive roof, with increased respect for the elegant lady Robert. Their own feelings bore testimony to the very extraordinary elucidations of the evening. Agnes felt that her fate was the very fabric that Love, aided by Fancy, had raised, and her gratitude was unbounded ; while Selina snatched the moment that Hope allowed her to dwell on, and nourished the conviction of Montgomery's acknowledged passion.

Before sir Edward parted with the *phlegmatic* Cecil, he had discovered numberless qualities in him, that, as the projected husband of Selina, had appeared defects.

Brooks parted with his favourite Selina with many a whispered prophecy of blooming days. Whether their purport, or the genius of the predestinarian, soothed her fluttering feelings, we know not, but the pillow of our heroine owned neither sighs nor tears ; but, with a healthful slumber,

blessed her devoted heart with a revision of the scene on which it delighted to dwell.

CHAP. VI.

“ I, from the orient to the drooping west,
Making the wind my post-horse, still unfold
The acts commenced on this ball of earth ;
Upon my tongues continued slanders ride,
The which in every language I pronounce,
Stuffing the ears of men with false reports.”

ACCUSTOMED as our heroine was to give the secrets of her bosom to the confidence of lady Mary, she felt a repugnance in the present instance, for which she could not account. “ I will not again,” said Selina, mentally, “ withhold from my more than parent the real state of my heart ; but, till this day has passed over, I may be spared the confusion attending such an explanation. Yes, certainly, *I* shall be exempted from the first mention of so delicate a subject.”

Alas ! poor sanguine Selina, how did thy heart flutter at every rap which shook the hall in Grosvenor-square next morning ! Cards of inquiry for Miss Asgill after her accident, first betrayed to sir Eldred and his daughter, that any such interruption to the pleasure of the preceding evening had taken place. Miss Melvin had been bound to secrecy, and the appearance of our heroine by no means indicated indisposition. The detail which Selina and Agnes gave of the entertainment proved highly amusing to the baronet and lady Mary ; but when they entered into a minute description of the Oracle and his invention, their eloquence failed, and sir Eldred, smiling, asked, “ if he was *now* to estimate their losses ? ”

“ Upon my word, my dear uncle,” said Selina, “ I did not lose any thing in the last night’s gaiety, excepting a few ringlets.”

Lady Mary shuddered at the danger her beloved child had escaped.

“ Then am I to infer,” said the baronet, “ that my niece went *heartless* to the mas-

qucrade? for I certainly was informed that a strong attack was to be made on the citadel of my Selina's affections, in which it was supposed the unprepared parties would betray all those genuine touches of nature which constitute the humble hope of terrestrial happiness."

"Then may *I* with conscious innocence avow," said Selina, catching the hand of sir Eldred, "that *my heart* owned no new feelings from the *denouement* of last night, excepting the soothing conviction of its being appreciated, where its secret vows have been unreservedly given."

"What a rebel heart is my Selina's!" said sir Eldred; "it flies from the shadow of restraint, and will not be guided by an old man."

"Ah, my dear sir," said Selina, while the tears fell down her cheeks, "wound me not by a supposition that *I* have again dared to act without your concurrence! No; believe your Selina too sincere in her penitence for her former undutiful conduct, ever to act for herself. That I listened to,

and was gratified by the avowal of a regard that met my heart's preference, is a truth I candidly avow; but no approval, no encouragement passed my lips."

"This, my little girl, is a pilgrim's confession," said sir Eldred. "How much rather would I consider you in masquerade *now*, than the companion of my social happiness thus habited in tears!"

Selina dried her tears, and lady Mary addressed Agnes, whose affections were warmly interested in the feelings of Selina. "A qualified confession from you, Miss Melvin, is all my friendship exacts. Was the Oracle presumptuous, or do you pardon his divinations?"

"Your ladyship's friendship, and my own happiness, demand," said Agnes, "that all affected reserve should be discarded. The ingenuity of the amiable lord Glastonbury betrayed me into the presence of Mr. Cecil; with conscious pride I avow, that the stratagem appeared to give that pleasure to him, that leaves me no room to regret having long owned the influence that

his amiable character is calculated to inspire."

"You will remember," said sir Eldred, "that I do not easily pardon the respect that my years demand; I shall consequently expect of you, Miss Melvin, that my *fatherly* interference be resorted to."

"The distinction is too flattering," said Agnes, "to be forgotten by me, sir Eldred. All I ask of you is, to bear with the unrefined manners of your guest, who, unused to the soothing voice of kindness for some time, may easily fall into the error of presumption."

"The freedom that is termed presuming," said lady Mary, "is as distinct from ingenuousness as formality is from politeness, neither of them claiming attention nor respect. Frank Cecil could not have selected as his choice, a female that I could not approve. I pride myself on knowing his heart, and of having had some share in the culture of his mind; yet I did not hope," continued her ladyship, with a smile of peculiar benignity, "that his election

would have presumed to divide a heart that has hitherto been devoted entirely to this girl," and she laid her arm on that of Selina; "but, perhaps," continued her ladyship, with a sigh, "it is a sort of weaning that Providence has assimilated with my friendships, to prepare me for the loss of my Selina, and by extending my affections, create new interests, and give energy to my widowed feelings."

Selina felt as though, at that moment, she could have devoted her future days to the comfort of the most amiable and beloved of friends. A servant announced her ladyship's chair.

"I must leave you, my dear girls," said lady Mary, rising. "I have an appointment of some moment. It is probable I may not be in time for dinner with you. Take care of my father;" and, attended by sir Eldred, she quitted the room.

"What a charming woman!" said Agnes. "I look on her with admiration and delight. If it were not abstracting from

the comforts of the good sir Eldred, I should express my regrets that, so qualified to adorn society, she yet bears the name of Millington."

"Then you never heard my cousin's story," said Selina. "Ah! Agnes, it is she who has borne the anguish of ill-requited or offended love. Cecil's family are in possession of many particulars, with which even *I* am unacquainted. You will, perhaps, at some future period, hear her melancholy tale; but let *me* engage your compassion for her deceiver. Remember, Agnes, the being who wounded my beloved protectress was the *father* of Selina! Pity him for my sake; but do not proscribe the extended love that you will accord my angelic cousin, when you learn with what magnanimity she took to her bosom the child of one who had erred so greatly."

The subject that our young friends had fallen into was broken in upon by the arrival of Cecil. Agnes felt a more than usual glow on her cheeks, as, in the face

of day, and unchecked by the presence of Selina, he expressed an affectionate solicitude for her health after the evening's exertion. Selina found it necessary to raise her spirits, lest the disappointment her heart felt in the absence of Montgomery should be visible. It was past two o'clock, and no inquiry from him had been made; grievous and humiliating were her feelings.

"I see," cried Cecil, taking the hand of our heroine, "that you have suffered from your fright last night. Why, you are feverish, Selina!—Where is lady Mary?"

"Indeed I am not," said Selina; "do not name such a thing, I entreat of you."

"I certainly must transgress from my injunctions," said Agnes; "I cannot in honour be silent, though you have made me promise. I have remarked on Miss Asgill's looks, but she insists on it I am mistaken."

"Well, leave me to my own cure till evening," said Selina; "and if I do not feel better, I will tell the important truth:

but you make no allowance for my rustic life and early hours ; I have often seen the sun rise, but never *sat* up to meet his beams."

" You did wrong, very wrong, to remain after your accident," said Cecil ; " and I beseech you, my sweet friend," addressing Agnes, " that you let no erroneous suggestions of this obstinate girl make you connive in so *important* a deception."

Agnes willingly acquiesced.

" You are very presuming," said Selina. " Pray, when do you go into Berkshire ?" looking archly.

" In three days," replied Cecil, " my duties call me. Is she not a cruel girl," said he, taking the hand of Agnes, " thus to remind me of my approaching deprivations ?"

" You go to a most agreeable society," said Agnes, and a half-suppressed sigh escaped her bosom.

" I am sensible of *all* my happiness," said Cecil ; " yet own there are degrees of

favour that more immediately interest and assimilate with my gratitude.—The walks round Moss Farm, Agnes——”

Agnes blushed deeply. It was the first time so familiar an epithet had fallen on her ear.

Cecil saw her sensibility. “Why does a reproving blush check the unequivocal feelings of a heart devoted to you? Selina knows that heart; she has been its support, its comfort, under the keen anguish of suspended hope. To you, my amiable girl, I have given a heart, that owns no divided claim. My profession nor my disposition admits of the embellishments that romantic passion resorts to; believe me a convert to the virtues which my moral feelings approve, and your allowing me to look forward to the bliss of protecting you through life, is a happiness no language can express.”

“I am not insensible,” said Agnes, with a faltering voice, “to the liberality, the tenderness of such sentiments; believe me, I fully appreciate them; and, need I add,

that to constitute the happiness of your life, is a hope on which my mind will willingly repose?"

"A thousand thanks, my love!" said Cecil. "Forgive my unfashionable definition of so intricate a feeling," and he pressed the yielding hand of Agnes to his lips.

Selina beheld the tender compact with all the cordiality of her nature, and secretly she mourned that *he* for whom her bosom throbbed, possessed not a disposition as well regulated, and under its own guidance.

While drawing comparisons thus thoughtlessly, lord Berriton entered with sir Eldred.

"Selina, my love," said sir Eldred, "lord Berriton inquires after your health. Surely the accident must have been *more* than you name, your friends are so punctual in their attentions."

"My friends are very obliging, dear sir," said Selina, curtseying to his lordship's salute; "but any little incident that breaks in upon the routine of a known arrangement, must excite a portion of interest."

“How divinely insensible to your attractions you must be!” said lord Berriton, regarding Selina attentively.

Selina smiled. “Or rather, my lord, how eloquently your lordship can descant on trifles—edging your satire by compliment!”

“No; upon my soul, I am serious,” said Berriton; “you have grown monstrously on my imagination since last evening.”

“Your lordship’s humanity, no doubt,” said sir Eldred, who could not exactly comprehend the oddity before him, “was excited for Miss Asgill. The peculiar interest of the female character is, that while they look to us for support, and claim our protection, their tears, or their dangers, make us the slaves of situation.”

“Exactly so, exactly so,” said Berriton. “I presume you have not always domesticated in the country, sir Eldred?”

“Not always, my lord,” said the baronet, still more surprised at the latitude of the peer’s conversation.

“Have you lived abroad?”

“ Many years of my life were passed on the Continent,” said sir Eldred, “ at different periods. Your lordship, no doubt, has travelled ?”

“ Travelled ! I’faith, sir, I galloped over as much ground in about three months as I have since done in three years ; and my career was only stopped by my tutor’s dying most conveniently of an apoplectic fit, just as we arrived at Paris. So then, *sans ceremonie*, I took the reins into my own hands, and——no, upon my soul, I am wrong there, for I dropped the reins—and became a perfect Parisian. Paris must be greatly altered since your time, sir Eldred.”

“ It has undergone many *degrading* changes,” said sir Eldred. “ France, in every epoch that history or observation offers to our view, is a country through which a *young* and inexperienced Englishman should *gallop*, to use your lordship’s words. Its vices ever possessed fascination, through the art of its devisers ; and *you*, who have visited it under its present lawless and degenerate estate, must have been in a

fearful vortex, wanting the society of a guardian."

"I believe, sir Eldred, you are right; but really, at the time, I was highly diverted, though I actually spent three thousand pounds in four months."

"If I mistake not, my lord," said Cecil, whom the peer had scarcely seemed to observe, "your lordship travelled under the name of Albany?"

"You are right, I did," said Berriton; "do you know me?"

"Perfectly, my lord," said Cecil. "I had the consolation of affording some little assistance to your tutor in his last moments."

"Oh! well, I declare I do recollect something about an English clergyman being at the hotel, and ordering La Val to give my compliments, and request him to attend Dr. Sutton, as I was engaged to the opera, and could not possibly remain at home."

"I remember the circumstance *particularly* well," said Cecil.

"No doubt, no doubt," said Berriton;

“ it is a part of your profession to reflect on the dead and dying.”

“ And *sometimes* to venture a hope for the *living*,” said Cecil, significantly.

“ Pray, Miss Asgill, can you ascertain whether any of your beauteous tresses were purloined last night ?”

“ It is a fact I cannot reply to,” said Selina, “ except from the conviction that no person could be so ridiculous.”

The inference that Cecil's explanation with lord Berriton too plainly intimated, made his lengthened visit more than troublesome. She replied, therefore, in as cool a way as possible. But even the flippant Berriton had power to awaken new perplexities in the mind of our heroine.

“ Allow me to name my motives for such curiosity. Calling, just now, at Grey's, about a watch he is making me, I saw a ringlet, the counterpart of those which grace your brow, given into the hands of a workman, with directions for the order being executed immediately. I seized the polished love-lock, and demanded to whom

it belonged? 'We cannot tell,' said Grey; 'our servant received it from a gentleman in a chaise and four, who, at six this morning, alarmed us by rapping at the door. He seemed in haste; but gave some very particular instructions as to its making up, and the time at which it was to be done.' 'Why, it is injured by fire,' said I. 'So we perceive, my lord,' said Grey; 'but we are not to lessen it but as little as possible.' Conceive the feelings of your slave," said Berriton, bowing to Selina, "when his susceptible heart blended the dread certainty of the hair being yours, and the interested stranger your lover. I could not live under the doubtful truth. Tell me, charming creature, tell me."

"Really, my lord," said Selina, retiring from the prostrate peer, "this sort of language and manner is to me most distressing. Where I consider myself at home, I should feel sorry to be rude, but in every situation of my life, I have found it suitable to my notions of right to be candid; your lordship's freedom does not flatter me, and

your compliments are an offence to my understanding."

"How cruelly severe!" said Berriton, rising. "We must impute this, sir Eldred," said he, turning to the baronet, "to want of ton; it will fade away as your charming ward associates in a certain walk of life."

"I sincerely hope not," said sir Eldred. "She was educated on principles of delicacy, and will, I am assured, continue to do justice to them."

Berriton looked mortified. He now turned to Agnes, whom he had not yet deigned to notice. "Do you expect the elegant lady Sophia in town?" said he, carelessly, and using his glass.

"I do not know her ladyship's plans," said Agnes.

"Curse me if I ever thought she had a plan," said Berriton, "except the daily system of her toilet. Did not you find her ladyship a monstrous bore?" said Berriton, turning to Cecil.

"I, my lord, could not venture to say any lady was a *bore*, much less one whom

your lordship termed elegant," said Cecil, smiling.

"Ah, there's the difference—you parsons think before you speak—while I *speake* without thinking at all."

"It is doubtless a good custom to speak like a parson, nevertheless," said sir Eldred; "it keeps a man's conscience in his own power, and allows him the inexpressible delight of reflection."

"It is custom, my dear sir," said the peer, "all custom."

Sir Eldred looked with mixed pity and contempt on the incorrigible fashionable. Agnes, who had always thought him ridiculous, now thought him odious; while our heroine's thoughts travelled to the jeweller's, and, uniting the absence of Montgomery with the stranger and the ringlet, she had formed a *probable* reason for his non-appearance, in some sudden journey, when Miss Wilmot, Mrs. Swivel, and Mrs. Arcot, were announced. In her present agitated state of mind, visitors of all descriptions were unpleasant; but those

she was obliged to receive were, of all others, least likely to beguile her chagrin.

“ Permit me to introduce my friend Mrs. Arcot,” said Miss Wilmot; “ her anxiety was inconceivable when she learned your accident.”

“ Indeed Miss Wilmot does me justice,” said Mrs. Arcot; “ I had not an idea of the danger you escaped.”

Selina expressed her thanks.

“ What an advantage you country ladies possess over us of the metropolis ! Really, I had not an idea that, after such a fainting fit, you could have looked so blooming to-day,” said Swivel.

“ It is yet more surprising,” said sir Eldred, “ that those belonging to Miss Asgill did not learn the extent of her accident. My Selina,” continued the baronet, taking her hand, “ was this kind of you to use reserve?”

“ My dear uncle,” said Selina, “ you know how any sudden surprise affects me, and how soon I recover its effects.”

“ Your hand,” said sir Eldred, “ does not indicate health.”

“ I shall be well to-morrow,” said Selina.

“ What an odd mortal that Montgomery is !” said Miss Wilmot. “ Really, while you were ill, any indifferent observer would have imagined he was your devoted admirer, and yet, this very morning, he left town in a chaise and four, accompanied by a female friend.”

Selina felt all the misery that the malicious Isabella meant she should.

“ Are you sure he had a lady with him ?” said lord Berriton.

“ He had a woman, my lord,” said Swivel. “ I will not vouch for her rank—it might be his handsome housekeeper, or the fair *incognita* that he has transported from Barnes, nobody knows whither.”

“ *That* lady, madam,” said Selina, “ I will vouch for being as much above censure as she is above my power to do justice to her worth.”

“ Very possible, my dear Miss Asgill ; but sir Warren Fagg, who attends all the people of rank in town, and who was constantly in that neighbourhood all the time

sir Edward was going backward and forward with a little shabby apothecary *incog.* could not make out who she was ; and he knows every body."

" I recollect," said Agnes, " that sir Warren's curiosity was excited very strongly in regard to this lady, and he ordered my faithful Mills to *make out* who she was ; but Mills declined the office, which greatly offended sir Warren and his deputy."

" Whom do you mean, Miss?" said Swivel, looking furiously at Agnes.

" Mr. Chillman, madam," said Agnes.

" Really, Miss Melvin, you must be cautious how you speak of a man of sir Warren's notoriety ; recollect whose sanction he owns."

" I recollect exactly, madam," said Agnes, " that fortune and exalted patronage have raised him to his present rank ; the former continues to favour him, but the latter is one of those nominal marks of approbation often bestowed at the solicitation of friends, and without a personal knowledge of desert."

“ Excessively odd ! ” said Swivel, who yet seemed to shrink from farther discussion.

“ But, my dear ladies,” said Berriton, “ leave sir Warren to Esculapius ; cannot you ascertain Montgomery’s companion ? — You know not my anxiety for this matter being cleared. Would to Heaven I had sent him a challenge ! ”

“ A challenge ! ” said Selina. “ My lord, I thought you parted good friends.”

“ So we did then, dear sensitive angel, but this morning, not an hour ago, I was refused admittance by the elegant —, and I heard her, only two days since, speak in raptures of Montgomery’s figure and address. By Heavens ! if I thought he were the cause—but it cannot be,” and catching a glimpse of his own figure in the pier glass, he adjusted his cravat, and his voice died into the softest cadence imaginable.

“ How much a frenzy becomes you ! ” said Isabella, laughing. “ Now do, my lord, fall in a passion again.”

“ Do not advise so alarming a resource,”

said Mrs. Arcot ; “ I always have such horrid reflections ; for my great-*uncle*, the duke of ——, was a most passionate man. His grace used to say to my *uncle*, lord John, that it was an hereditary possession of the family ; and if lord John only ventured an opinion on the subject, his grace would storm and rave till almost frantic ; but, to be sure, my *uncle* was indifferent to *rank*, which greatly vexed my great-*aunt*, the lady Jemima Cheveron. Now do not talk of passions, I beseech you !—Might I ask the favour of your morning dress as a pattern ? ” said Mrs. Arcot to Selina, descending from the heraldry of *noble* frenzy, to the minute observation of a very simple undress.

“ Certainly, madam,” said Selina, “ if you desire it.”

“ Now, my dear Miss Asgill,” said Isabella, “ guess, of all the birds in the air, and all the fishes in the sea, whom my sister Harriet has selected for her *caro sposa* ? ”

“ Colonel Stratton,” said Selina.

“ *Mon Dieu!* why, had *you* any notion of it?”

“ I certainly have long remarked the colonel’s unaffected attachment to your sister, and rejoice to find it is mutual.”

“ Rejoice !” said Isabella; “ how can you be so cruel? Consider what a connexion! Why, he is known to all the beggars in town, stands in the market-places to mark out hungry faces, and actually is a very immoral man beside.”

“ Unless your last observation can be substantiated,” said Selina, “ I see only honour in the connexion.”

“ The virtues of the young lady this amiable philanthropist has chosen,” said sir Eldred, “ leave a hope to his admirers that his career of mercy will not close, but go hand-in-hand with his affections.”

“ Not a doubt can be entertained of the advantages colonel Stratton will derive in the society of the gentlest and most liberal of girls,” said Agnes. “ I speak of her from experience. As a daughter, a friend, Har-

riet Wilmot must ever rank high. Nay, her present election is a striking proof that she is of a superior turn of mind."

"Undoubtedly, if *eccentricity* be an inseparable quality of a great mind," said Swivel, "Harriet Wilmot is a great woman."

"She wants patronage, don't she, Swivel?" said Berriton, taking a pinch of snuff.

"I must admire her humility, then," said Swivel; "for where she has found favour, the distinction is little flattering. The meanest pauper that ever vended her tale in all the garble of whining imposition, could catch the wax-like heart of the would-be Howard; therefore——"

"Therefore, madam, is his heart invaluable," interrupted sir Eldred, with warmth. "Colonel Stratton must necessarily be a judge of human nature; if he has served the vicious, it is because he considers the mass as one great family, and *he* would not shut his ear to a brother or sister in need. That his penetration leads him to detect the wilful and malevolent babbler, I must

believe," and he glanced slightly over the features of Swivel, who felt the reference to her former visit in Grosvenor-square; "but to be selected from the frivolous and devoted fashionables of the day, is at once flattering and soothing to that laudable *vanity* which every woman of delicacy must possess."

"Very well, sir Eldred, very well," said Swivel; "I perceive that the colonel's sentimental *French plate*, as Sheridan calls it, can find currency even with the wise and experienced."

Sir Eldred smiled at the compliment, but made no reply.

"What a devilish good character Mrs. Candour is!" said Berriton. "I think, Swivel, you could enact that without a prompter."

"When your lordship has been *received* as the finished lacquey in the same piece, I may, perhaps, venture before the public," said Swivel.

"Egad, Swivel, you have long been the

public talk," said Berriton. "It is true, you retired from the stage."

"You are too civil, sir; one would think you were a pupil of Stratton's, from your satire."

"Not I, upon my soul! the colonel never does more than *quizz* my verse, and furnish me with an insatiate desire to visit other climes—a pilgrim to the Muses."

"Where is lady Mary?" said Miss Wilmot; "I hope her ladyship is well."

Selina accounted for her absence.

"Rumour says," said Swivel, "that her ladyship's humanity has been directed to the reforming lady Fitzowen's domestic happiness. I should be sorry your amiable friend had undertaken so vague an attempt; I could have assured her ladyship that it would be impossible to awaken her to a sense of right. She is incorrigible; and, indeed, it would be mercy *now* to let her remain as she is; for Fitzowen, tired out by her affectation, has sought and found consolation from home."

“ I trust not,” said our heroine. “ Rumour is an incredible asserter ; I never heed the many-headed monster.”

“ Sweet girl !” said Swivel ; “ happy for *you* that you do not.”

Selina turned involuntarily towards the fabulator.

“ Yes, even you, all-artless as you are,” continued Swivel, in a low voice, which the general conversation of the engaged parties made secure, “ are *now* the talk of the town.”

“ I, madam !”

“ Ah, Miss Asgill, when will your superior genius lead you to see your *friends* as you ought ? That specious syren, Miss Melvin, has won your first love, and Montgomery laughs at the preference with which you honour him ; while the beautiful Mrs. Mayfield, his youthful housekeeper, is the confidant of his bosom, and unites in ridiculing a distinction that half the men of rank in London are sighing to obtain. How many have petitioned *me* to assure you of their admiration, their despair !”

Contemptible as was the communication of the insidious hypocrite, yet had it some weight with Selina. Agnes, whose guileless nature she estimated with justice, suffered no diminution in her esteem ; for all the circumstances that attended that good girl's fate had found ostensible claims on her feelings. Not so with the suspended feelings of love. The absence of Montgomery was a wounding dereliction from the general warmth of heart that had ever accompanied his actions. Gratitude, delicacy, and, above all, love, all-potent love, should have brought him to her presence that day. What then but some powerful, some more than usual attraction, could have made him remiss, after her unsophisticated reply to his offered heart ? and Swivel, whose malice and character she despised, found credence with the heart-wounded and humbled Selina. Berriton's love-lock was torn from her bosom ; and she, who would a few hours before have spurned the idea of a blemish in the fair fame of him in whom her every wish was centered, now believed

him partially criminal. That he had ever named her irreverently, was a thought she could not admit; but that some entanglement, some female, withheld him from confirming the vows of the preceding evening, was a truth that her agitated and humiliated feelings but too readily accredited. Swivel saw her triumph, and poured the poisonous infusion into the ears of Selina, with all the facility of her nature.

Mrs. Arcot, who, excepting her imitative qualities of dress and style, was a mere automaton, now recollected that her cousin lady Ebony, and governor Golconda, were waiting her participation in an eastern *hir-carrah* newly imported, arose, and expressed her regret at quitting the elegant Miss Asgill; repeated her admiration of her dishabille, and reminded her companions that she would frank them in her carriage, if they could tear themselves from such society.

Isabella gladly quitted a group so little suited to her taste. Swivel whispered our

heroine the regrets she felt at being drawn away by such an insipid creature as Mrs. Arcot ; pitied her to find that the elegance of her taste had subjected her to the innovations of the ridiculous copyist ; adding, she was afraid her wardrobe would be so scattered in future, as to make the *unique costume* and classical correctness of her draperies less convenient to her unassuming superiority.

Selina smiled languidly, but replied only by a silent curtsy. Could she have heard the veering friend ridicule, in the next moment, the rustic blushes and primitive manners of the hoydenish heiress, as she called her, her mind would have revolted from the most remote inquietude that a being so void of principle could have effected ; but such are the perplexities that a passion founded on delicacy inflicts—it shrinks from probable good, and embraces the most improbable evil.

Before the dinner-hour, the morning loungers had left our heroine and Agnes to the uninterrupted enjoyment of a rational

hour. High as Agnes stood in her confidence, yet she could not venture to speak on the subject nearest her heart.

Sir Eldred, when they met at dinner, failed not to descant on the personages who had intruded on their time. "I regret to see," said the baronet, "the frivolousness of character that marks a modern fashionable. That youth should have its season of gaiety, is a disposition of Providence, that, by elucidating the evanescent and fleeting pleasures which court its grasp, should lead the attuned and corrected feelings to appreciate the mild reign of reason and matured observation; but that folly and vice should be the associate qualities of the opening mind, that it should be deemed inseparable to blend the ideas of youth with correct moral firmness, is a melancholy reflection to a thinking mind, and evinces the degeneracy of the times. I would apply the incomparable lines of lord Lyttleton on his wife, which admit a reference to either sex :

“ Though meek, magnanimous; though witty, wise;

Polite, as all her life in courts had been;

Yet good, as she the world had never seen.”

“ the rock on which the bark of youth splits is that faithless fabric, *false shame*—a bugbear to which corruption gives the intoxicating name of fashion, thus blunting her shameless system. How many blush to avow a moral sense of right, because *custom* has termed *morality* formal, puritanical, primitive! and no person of *rank* would like to bear either of these old-fashioned epithets; yet with what *sang froid* they take up the character of a *dasher*, a *quizz*, a *pedestrian*, a *boxer*, because *fashion* has distinguished the degrading assumptions! Learning, the path of fame, seems a road untrodden. If the productions of triflers in the literary annals are received, where is the wonder there are no competitors for fame? Addison, Steele, Pope, Johnson, Burke, where are your compeers? Ye lashed, with *virtuous* satire, the follies of the age, putting men out of love with

vice. Your language was a classic stream, over which the unsated eye, delighted, roved, deriving pleasure and extended thought at every page ! My dear children," said sir Eldred, " while I am leading you to regret the manners of the young, should I not ask your forbearance for the tediousness of age ? It has been remarked that age loves to dwell upon the days that are gone, that it gilds the past, and recedes from the spring in view. With the gloomy, dissatisfied man, this may be just ; but he who, in his own circle, blends the contemplation of all that is rational and praiseworthy, can be accused of no motive in his strictures, save the Christian-like hope of seeing common sense reinstated."

To the conversation of sir Eldred Selina was ever affectionately attentive, yet to arrange her ideas at this juncture seemed impossible. Agnes supplied her place, by the most respectful deference to the judicious reformer.

Lady Mary did not return till the even-

ing was far advanced. Her observation on the hectic cheek of Selina not tending to make her happy, our heroine, obedient to the solicitude of her beloved friend, sought the retirement of her chamber. Agnes pressed the feverish hand of Selina with sisterly affection, as she asked to watch her pillow. Lady Mary claimed that privilege herself; but Selina refused to take repose on such terms, and her ladyship, with difficulty, was persuaded to forego her attendance.

Selina had reflected upon the mischiefs which Miss Wilmot and Swivel seemed to delight in promulgating, and though their censure was praise, yet did a sensation new to her bosom give some colour to the shade cast on Montgomery. Severely did she regret the unequivocal suffrage she had given to his suit. “Why am I thus painfully convinced that candour may, by an injudicious preference, a mistaken confidence, recoil upon its possessor with such heartfelt anguish?” said Selina. “Oh,

Montgomery ! could I have believed that, assured of Selina's affections, you would thus have wounded her delicacy !”

How far her ruminations would have led her, is uncertain ; it was happy for the heart-stricken Selina, that at that moment a light footstep, and a taper gliding across her apartment, diverted her thoughts from their present melancholy. “ Susan, is it you ?” asked Selina.

“ Dear heart ! have I waked you ?” said Susan.

“ I have not slept,” said Selina ; “ is any thing the matter ?”

“ No, Miss ; only my lady bid me look in, and see if you were asleep, before I went to bed.”

“ Do not tell my cousin that I cannot rest,” said our heroine ; “ but pray go, Susan ; it is late.”

“ As for that, Miss, I should be glad if you would let me sit by you all night. Hang these masquerades ! I say. Why, I declare to goodness, your face is like scarlet, and your hand—dear heart ! it is quite

like a *furnis*. And there was sir Edward Montgomery too, this morning—he, why, he was as white as my apron. Hang these masquerades! I say; I should not wonder if you were both to have a *contiguous* fever!”

“Who told you sir Edward was ill?” said Selina, with haste.

“Nobody told me,” said Susan, “I took my own opinion upon it. But I forgot, I promised not to say he had called. So good-night, Miss,” and she was quitting the room, when Selina exclaimed—“Stay, Susan, I want you. (Susan returned.) When did sir Edward call?”

“Why, Miss, in about an hour after you came home this morning. Fanny had just gone to bed, and I was laughing at some of the odd masks that went to the next house—for it was broad day, you know, Miss—when who should I see but sir Edward Montgomery, in a great wrapping coat, and he beckoned me to go down stairs. So I thought there could be no harm, as I never heard he was an *unmodest*

man; so I went—and so says he, ‘Where is your *angelica* mistress?’ ‘Why,’ says I, ‘sir, I hope she has been asleep these six hours,’ ‘Six hours!’ says he; ‘it is not an hour since I saw her.’ ‘Lauk, sir,’ says I, ‘you mean Miss Asgill!’ and you can’t think how glad I was, Miss, to hear that you had for certain *picked up* another sweetheart; for its no *vantage* for a woman to break with her first love. People will talk, and every body don’t like to take another man’s leavings; though I sincerely hope *you gaved* parson Cecil up, and did not let that make-believe lady, the governess, snap him from you.”

“Susan,” said Selina, whose curiosity conquered her resentment, “how ill you judge in speaking of Miss Melvin, who is the most amiable of girls! But, pray go on.”

“I do mean Miss Asgill,” said sir Edward. ‘What shall I do?’ says he, putting his hand to his forehead; ‘she will think me ungrateful. Could you get me pen and ink?’ said he. ‘No, no—that will not do. Yes, I will write to sir Eldred.’ I had just led

him into the cedar parlour, Miss, when Mr. Wilson *comed* in such a fluster, and told sir Edward the chaise waited, and her ladyship entreated he would not lose a moment. ‘ Dear girl,’ said sir Edward, throwing the pen on one side, ‘ for this once, friendship must take place of love : do not name my having been here,’ said he ; ‘ a few days will, I hope, bring me back ;’ and he put his purse into my hands, Miss, and said he was ashamed to keep me so long shivering in the air ; for the morning was cool, I can assure you. Howsomdever, my mind misgived me about the lady and the chaise, so I axed Mr. Wilson just to spare me a moment’s conversion, and Mr. Wilson is always particularly civil to me ; so, says I, ‘ for the love of goodness, tell me if any black work is going on. Who is the lady your master is going off with ?’ ‘ My master going off with a lady !’ says he ; ‘ I am sorry, Mrs. Susan, you do not know *us* better. My master would lay down his life to *save* a woman ; my master is a man of courage—he would fight a lion, but shelter a

lamb; to oppress the weak, Mrs. Susan, is not *our* way,' and he looked so handsome, ma'am, while he said so, that I could not help crying, as I leaned upon the rails and watched the chaise and four turning round Upper Brook-street."

"No wonder, Susan," said Selina; "there was a great deal of morality in such sentiments; he must be a good young man. Then you saw the chaise, Susan?"

"Yes, ma'am; it stood within a few yards of our house. Wilson was going to order it to the door, but sir Edward said the noise might disturb my *missis*; you know he takes *you* for my *missis*," said Susan, looking archly at Selina, whose speaking eyes were fixed on the face of the intelligencer.

"But you had undeceived sir Edward," said Selina, with a smile, "so *we* wont trouble ourselves whom he was afraid to disturb."

"Aye, but all his fears about noise was forgot in about five minutes after, for back

comes the chaise ; I had just put my night-cap on, and was going to take a short nap, when a gentle ring at the servants' bell made me start. I peeped up the area, and who should I see but sir Edward ! ‘ In the name of fortune,’ says I, ‘ what has brought you back again ?’ but he beckoned me to go up stairs. So I did, and then he said he had dropped a very valuable treasure, and begged I would take him to the parlour he had been in. I did so. I looked about, expecting to see some fine diamond case, or picture, or locket ; but he seized a bit of paper off the floor, and pressed it to his lips, declaring it was impossible to describe his happiness in finding it. So then, when he got into the chaise, he ordered the postboys to go to Grey’s, in Bond-street, as it would make but a few minutes difference in the journey, ‘ and it shall be shrined,’ says he. So I suppose,” continued Susan, “ it was some rough diamond he is going to have polished and shined up.”

“ Very likely,” said Selina, whose soothed

and flattered feelings seemed insensibly to assuage the irritation that suspense had been gradually effecting on her frame. "Indeed, Susan, you have been transgressing orders," said Selina; "you had better go, my good girl; you must want rest."

"Indeed I am afraid I have done wrong," said Susan; "for sir Edward bid me say nothing about his coming; yet, somehow, I thought you would not dislike to hear that a fine handsome young *barrowknight* was in love with you; for we all like to find ourselves *objects* with the other *sect*."

Selina felt forcibly that her own condescension in using the pronoun *we* had caused the familiarity of the loquacious Susan to exceed even her usual boldness. She smiled at the foible of her attendant, and repeating her fears of keeping her later, dismissed the talkative Susan, who yet found time to say, "that she was exceedingly sorry Mr. Wilson had seen her in her nightcap, though she had often been told she became it very much."

Selina replied not; but, more composed than if sir Warren himself had administered an opiate, she sank into a slumber, the effect of tranquillized nerves. Montgomery was gone; it was on some virtuous errand. Isabella, Swivel, your malice was shaftless. Berriton, the insipid Berriton, and the giddy Susan, your united narration formed a probable hope for love to repose on; and, on its tender record, sleep visited her pillow, embalming her regrets with its airy visions, at once the offspring of fancy and the meed of health.

If there be any who condemn the conduct of our heroine in thus communicating with her servant, we shrink not from her censure, for she never loved. We offer not to draw a perfect being, but a *natural woman*. Alas! and do we live in days when such things are not? Must we believe that the dispensation which external appearance has adopted has enveloped the heart, and left the *person* only visible? We hope not. Virtue, that efficient coat of mail, is able to

repel the attacks of vice, though fashionable, and make the heart's *transparency* an heavenly contemplation.

END OF VOL. IV.

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